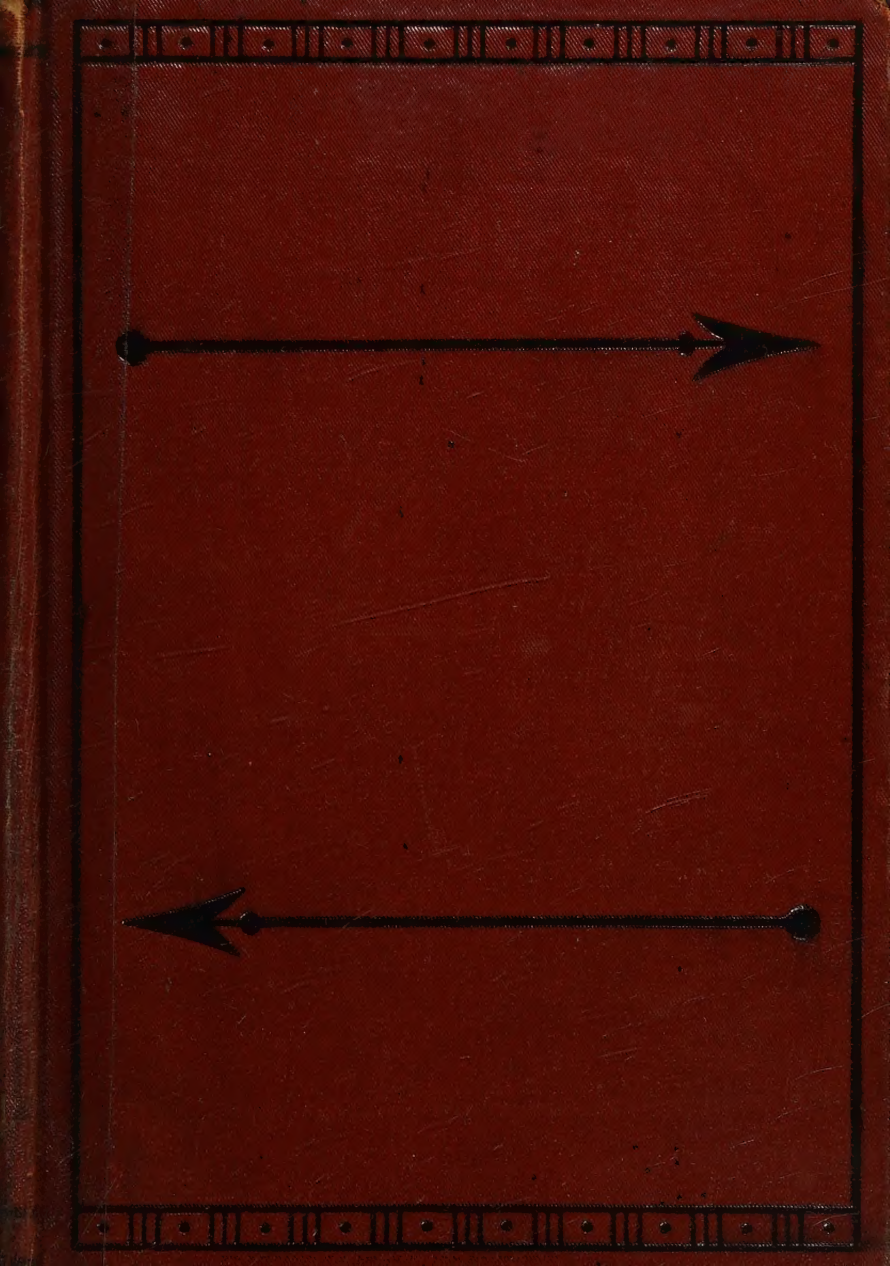

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THE SHADOWED HOME,

AND THE

LIGHT BEYOND.

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THE

SHADOWED HOME,

AND

THE LIGHT BEYOND.

BY

EDWARD HENRY BICKERSTETH,

VICAR OF CHRIST CHURCH, HAMPSTEAD.

They are not tasting death, but taking rest
On the same holy couch where Jesus lay,
Soon to awake all glorified and blest,
When the day breaks and shadows flee away.

Burial Service
title

New York:
ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS,
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IN HOLY MEMORY OF

R. B.,

AND ALSO OF

CONSTANCE, EVA, ALICE, AND IRENE,

NOW GATHERED TO THEIR MOTHER,

IN THE CALM LIGHT OF THE

PRESENCE OF JESUS.

6182

PREFACE.

THIS little volume consists of meditations on "The Order for the Burial of the Dead," in the book of Common Prayer. It is especially designed for perusal in those sacred days, which intervene between the death and burial of those we love. The closed shutters, or the drawn blinds, tell of this world being veiled from view for a season. And it is then, while the beloved tabernacle still lies in the silent chamber as in a domestic sanctuary, that the thoughts of the bereaved mourners instinctively turn to things unseen and eternal.

Now the Burial Office of our Prayer-book has gathered together the ample testimony of Scripture regarding the holy dead, and presented it for our

study and consolation in the most admirable sequence of thought. But it is to many of those who join in it so unfamiliar, that it comes to them with a sense of strangeness, which prevents them finding all the instruction and comfort it is designed to convey. They listen. The heart responds. The silent tear tells how deeply they are moved. But, almost before they are aware, the last accents of the ministering clergyman fall upon their ear, and they retire from the grave solemnized and subdued ; and yet, it may be, never to recall the beautiful texture of the words, which have awakened so true an echo in their souls, till they stand, perhaps after many years, around the same or another newly-opened grave.

Having written much and preached often during the last twenty-five years on the blessedness of the holy dead, and the perfect consummation of the risen saints, I have ventured in this volume to group together many scattered thoughts which have been submitted to my readers or hearers. The outline and partial filling up of the argument in three or four

chapters will be found in my "Commentary on the New Testament," under John xi. and 1 Cor. xv.; and in a tractate, entitled "Hades and Heaven;" and the hymns, or fragments of poems, at the close of the chapters, have most of them appeared in print before. But if this little manual shall enable those who love and mourn in homes, which a Father's Hand has darkened with the shadow of death, to take a more intelligent part in the most touching of all the offices of our Church, and shall point the eye of faith to that Home which no cloud shall ever shadow, it will be a cause of deep thankfulness to one whom the Master has called to spell out His blessed will in the school of sorrow and bereavement.

E. H. B.

CHRIST CHURCH VICARAGE.

Hampstead, October 21st, 1874.

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PART I.

FROM THE LYCH-GATE TO THE CHURCH.

THE ORDER FOR THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD.[a]

¶ *The Priest and Clerks meeting the Corpse at the entrance of the Churchyard, and going before it, either into the Church, or towards the Grave, shall say, or sing,*

I AM the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.—*S. John* xi. 25, 26.

I KNOW that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.—*Job* xix. 25, 26, 27.

WE brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord.—1 *Tim.* vi. 7; *Job* i. 21.

SUCH are the three voices which fall upon our ear, as we enter the Churchyard or Cemetery, bearing the holy tabernacle of

[a] ¶ Here is to be noted, that the Office ensuing is not to be used for any that die unbaptized, or excommunicate, or have laid violent hands upon themselves.

the departed saint to its last earthly resting-place. There is the voice of the Saviour, who has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel, affirming, I am the resurrection and the life. This seems to awaken in the ear of faith the trustful voice of the beloved one who sleeps in Him, I know that my Redeemer liveth. And once more these two voices are met by the response of the bereaved and yet comforted mourners, The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In these three voices combined we catch the far echo of the everlasting triumph-song of life over death.

THE VOICE OF THE SAVIOUR.

I AM the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.

LET us recall the sacred hour when these words were first spoken. Death had overshadowed the home which Jesus loved at Bethany. Lazarus had fallen asleep. The Master was in Peræa, beyond Jordan, with His disciples. And though the anxious message sent by Martha and Mary, Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick, had reached Him, and though He might by pressing His journey have reached Bethany in one day, Jesus, we read, abode two days still in the same place where He was. We should perhaps have anticipated that He would have arisen straightway, saying, I will come and heal him. But as the heavens are higher than the

earth, so are the ways of Divine wisdom higher than our ways, and the thoughts of Divine love than our thoughts. If the Lord had arrived before the death of Lazarus, another work indeed would have been added to His many works of healing; but the mightiest proof of His triumph over death before He suffered, the exquisite sympathy of His tears and tender dealing with the bereaved sisters, the consolation flowing from that stricken house to all after-ages of the Church, could have found no place. Four days of bitter anguish would have been averted from those sorrowing mourners; but consolations, which eternity alone can measure, would have been lost to them and us.

Meanwhile Lazarus died. And, when His hour was come, Jesus arose to go into Judæa again. His disciples tremble, first for their beloved Master, and then for themselves. But when the path of duty was plain, no peril ever deterred Him. He set His face like a flint. And as they were going, He said, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep. In heaven's language the death of saints is sleep; but this language was not here understood by the disciples. The lofty freedom of the Divine

style is excellent beyond compare; but man's dull apprehension makes Scripture often stoop to our more sombre way of speaking.[b] Christ, on an earlier occasion, had interpreted this celestial dialect, when, ere He raised Jairus' daughter, He said, The maiden is not dead, but sleepeth.[c] But, probably, from misunderstanding His words, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, the disciples were persuaded that Lazarus would not actually die; and therefore when He afterwards said, Our friend sleepeth, they thought that the Lord had given His beloved sleep,—that at His command Lazarus had fallen into that long, refreshing, peaceful sleep, which so often marks a favourable crisis in dangerous illness. Jesus therefore drops heaven's figurative language, and speaks in that of men: Lazarus is dead; and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe, implying that if He had been there, He would not have permitted His friend to die. It is in beautiful keeping with the Divine dignity that no one is ever said to have died in the presence of the Prince of Life.

In the words of Thomas, which follow, Let us also

[b] *See* Bengel, here and below. [c] Matt. ix. 24.

go that we may die with Him, there was something of despondency, but more of devotedness ; something of fearfulness, but more of fidelity. A profound melancholy marks that apostle's character, so far as we can estimate it from the few and scattered notices vouchsafed us ; a melancholy, however, that only casts its solemnizing shadow over a peculiar depth and truthfulness of affection.

Thus they came to Bethany ; and meanwhile many of the Jews had flocked to the house of the sorrowing Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. The true Comforter was at hand. He probably tarried outside the village at a spot which was not far from the sepulchre. Tidings of His approach went before Him, and probably reached both sisters. Martha, true to her character of action, went to meet Him : Mary, true to hers of contemplative calm, sate still in the house. The contrast seems designedly drawn.

Her first words, Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died, the same which afterwards fell from the lips of her sister, had, doubtless, been the burden of their mutual lamentations. Whose faith has not been tried by thoughts like theirs? But the

waving of the hand of Omnipotence, but the faintest whisper of the Divine voice,—and bereavements, which perhaps have shadowed all our after-pilgrimage, would have been averted. It might not be: that Hand was still; that Voice was silent. Martha, however, with a persistent faith, continues, I know that even now that whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee. She clung to Him who was mighty to save. She did not cling in vain.

In the response of Jesus, Thy brother shall rise again, the near and the distant resurrection are embraced. The promise was thrown out for faith to interpret. The highest faith would have grasped all its meaning. Martha's only attained that hope which was far off. Yet her reply, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day, unhesitatingly affirms that great article of our Creed, I believe in the resurrection of the flesh.

And now it is, that our Lord with Divinest grace and condescension helps her faith to birth in those words, which stand in the fore-front of our Burial Service, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never

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die. It is as if He would say, that resurrection at the last day, of which thou hast spoken, shall be accomplished by the power of Him who is now before thee. Thou hast spoken of that which shall be hereafter; but I AM the resurrection and the life, *the resurrection of those who die, and the life of those who live.*[d] All things present, as well as future, are in My hand. I can raise thy brother now, as I will raise him and all My people then. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead (as Lazarus is now dead, and as so many saints shall fall asleep in Me), yet shall he live;—Lazarus immediately, in pledge of the future resurrection; the sleeping saints at My return in glory. And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me, those My saints who are alive and remain until My second coming,[e] shall never die: they shall never die, for they shall be translated in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and like Enoch and Elias, shall without dying enter upon the fruition of eternal life.

Such appears to be the plain prophetic meaning of this great central saying of our Lord. We know, from other Scriptures, how it embraces the uninterrupted life of the disembodied spirit in Paradise, and the

[d] Bengel. [e] 1 Thess. iv. 15—17.

abolition and swallowing up of death in victory.[f] And when Jesus asks, Believest thou this? the question draws forth all Martha's unwavering confidence in the Person of the Saviour, though she could not understand all the present comfort of the truths affirmed. She could and did answer, Yea, Lord, I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God which should come into the world. How often is it so with us! Oppressed with the mysteries or dazzled with the glory which the Word of God reveals, we can only cast ourselves at the feet of Jesus. Doctrines are too high or too deep for us; but we rest upon Jesus Himself, and are at peace. We are at peace, not because we have fathomed the redemption, but because we trust in the Redeemer.

The Lord now summons Mary by her sister's lips. Perhaps there was more of that receptive faith, which He usually required, ere He wrought any miracle, in her than in Martha. The message was secretly given, and immediately obeyed; yet, in the providence of God, not unobservedly. The Jews saw her hasty departure, and, divining that she went to the grave to weep there, followed her. Thus many more eye-witnesses,

[f] *See* Rom. xiv. 8; 2 Cor. v. 8; 2 Tim. i. 10.

and some of them hostile to Jesus, were present. Meanwhile, Mary, when she came where Jesus was, fell at His feet. We cannot but remember a former occasion when she sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word.[g] It was her chosen place. They who sit at Jesus' feet in times of prosperity will instinctively cast themselves there in times of sore necessity.

Her tears and those of the Jews touched the very soul of the Man of Sorrows. He groaned with indignation and grief of spirit,—the indignation of Divine love over the ravages which sin had wrought, and the grief of human compassion over the anguish of stricken hearts—and was troubled or shuddered, His audible groan, expressive of mental and spiritual distress, being accompanied with a visible shudder of His frame. So truly was He bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Yet He so commanded His emotions, which were stirred to their depths, as to be able to ask, Where have ye laid him? And when in tones subdued by the sacredness of sorrow they one and all reply, Lord, come and see, then we read, JESUS WEPT. It is not the same word in the Greek which is used of the weeping of Mary and the Jews, but implies the silent

[g] Luke x. 39.

flow of tears. Over Jerusalem indeed, shortly after, He wept with lamentation ;[h] for Jerusalem was resisting all His love. Over the grave of His friend He shed tears,[i] for it was well with Lazarus, and the Master sorrowed not for him as those who have no hope. And surely there are hours with us all, when the consolations of the Gospel seem condensed and combined in this one assurance. Infinite love has mingled its tears with ours. The desolate heart whispers to itself, *Jesus wept*, and sorrow loses its bitterness. We weep on, but not as before.

Most of the Jews who were present felt all the suasive power of His sympathy ; but some cast reflections on His not hastening earlier to His friend, ere death had, as they thought, irrevocably snatched him away. Their distress deepened His ; for Jesus again groaning in Himself, another audible though inarticulate utterance of the anguish that rent His compassionate bosom, cometh to the grave,[j] which was hewn in the rock, and situate doubtless according to their custom just without the village.

And now the hour was come. No moment, ere

[h] ἔκλαυσεν (Luke xix. 41). [i] ἐδάκρυσεν.

[j] μνημεῖον, the rocky cavern betokens the wealth of the family.

hostile armies meet in battle, can compare in sublime interest with this scene on the hill-side at Bethany—the Lord of Life confronting Death face to face. Yet, when He said, Take ye away the stone, the ponderous stone which blocked up the entrance of the cave, Martha, the sister, as the Evangelist adds, of him that was dead (how true to nature is the introduction of these words here! it was the closeness of the kinship which made her more than the Jews shrink from the exposure of the tomb), said, Lord, by this time he stinketh (a fact of which she could have no doubt in that climate), for he hath been dead four days. In these her words human reasoning gets the upper hand of faith. The Lord at once succours her, reminding her of His assurance and promise, which, though expressed in other terms, certified her that, believing, she should see the glory of God. And now, faith resuming its power, she as head of the family consents to the removal of the stone. Man had done all that lay in his power: God must do the rest.

Then Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. How graciously is the veil here partially withdrawn by the hand of Christ Himself, that veil which usually con-

ceals the communing and co-working of the Eternal Son with the Eternal Father! As we humbly gaze into the excellent glory, we learn that Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, did nothing *of Himself*,[k] i.e. apart from or opposed to the Father; and, as the Son of Man, wrought His works not by virtue of His own Almighty power, though that power was ever inherent in Him, but by virtue of His Father's omnipotence, sought by prayer and vouchsafed to Him in the plenitude of the grace of the Holy Spirit. His fellowship with the Father was uninterrupted. There was no intermission, no lapse, no decline; and in this most holy act of praise we see the victory of faith in Him who is the Author and Finisher of the faith. It was for the sake of the bystanders, for theirs and ours, that these wondrous words were audibly uttered. May we hear and believe, and reverently seek for grace to pray as He prayed!

After this act of praise He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. We know the glorious issue. Only let us remember this voice is the prelude of that Omnipotent call, which all that are in the graves shall hear and shall obey. He called Lazarus by name,

[k] ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ, John v. 19.

and when He descends from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God,[1] His summons will address every saint in one breath, in one moment. Is it in vain to try and picture to ourselves the ecstasy of Martha and Mary, the exultation of the disciples, the confusion of those Jews who believed not, and, may we not add, the holy joy of our Lord, when Lazarus came forth, and at His command was loosed from the cerements of death, and stood among them a living man in the land of the living? Are these facts hard to realize? What, at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the clouds of heaven, will be our gathering together unto Him, the final victory over death, the everlasting shame of the powers of darkness, the meeting never to part again of all who love God, the fulfilment of the Eternal good pleasure when the marriage of the Lamb shall have come, and His wife have made herself ready. We speak of these things, and we believe them. God grant that we may daily live in the light of the coming glory!

I have dwelt the longer on this first voice which falls upon our ears, as we bear the sacred tabernacle

[1] 1 Thes. iv. 16.

of one we love into God's acre, for it strikes the key-note of the whole service, and it is only to be understood in connexion with that wondrous narrative of the Gospel with which it is so closely intertwined. Whatever confessions, and lamentations, and cries from the depths of humiliation and grief are afterwards to be found in this Office for the Burial of the Dead, they are not, and they must not be interpreted by us, as out of harmony with this pæan song of the Captain of our salvation, I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.

THE VOICE OF THE SAINT.

THE voice of the Saviour is silent. And for a little space we hear nothing but the subdued tread of the bearers, as we slowly follow the coffin between the gravestones on either side of the narrow churchyard path. But now another voice falls upon our ears:—

I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.

These words of the patriarch Job, which occur in the centre of the noble inspired poem that bears his name, supply a vantage-ground for contemplating the history of his life. They reflect the transition which was taking place in his mind. It is no longer the passionate lamentation of the sufferer, or the impe-

tuous self-vindication of the consciously upright man; but the calm affiance of one who rested in the assurance that God knew the path he was treading, and when He had tried him would bring him forth as gold.[m]

The early prosperity of Job is sketched in few but vivid words. The man was perfect and upright; one that feared God and eschewed evil. He had seven sons and three daughters; and his possessions were so abundant that he was the greatest of all the men of the East. Nor have we any reason to doubt that the picture which he draws so exquisitely was the simple

[m] That Job was a true historical character, and not, as some have vainly contended, an imaginary person, introduced as the hero of a legend or parable, appears certain, (1) from the opening chapters and most of the last chapter being written in prose, as any other narration of facts, whereas the intervening dialogue is in Hebrew verse; (2) from Job being numbered by God with Noah and Daniel (Ezek. xiv. 14), and (3) from the Apostle St. James referring to him as a veritable ensample of patience. Nor is it needful to imagine the dialogue, though in verse, to have been spoken otherwise than as recorded; for the highly ornate style in which some Eastern nations express themselves is in effect poetry, and easily and often assumes a rhythmical form. Many indications seem to point to the events narrated taking place between the death of Joseph and the Exodus; and the tradition of the Jews that it was translated, if not composed, by Moses, and given by him to the Israelites to sustain them under the oppression of Egypt, seems far from improbable.

record of his own experience in the days of his youth, when the secret of God was upon his tabernacle. Then, he says, The Almighty was with me, and my children were about me: then I washed my steps with butter, and the rock poured me out rivers of oil. When I went out to the gate through the city, the young men saw me and hid themselves, and the aged arose and stood up: the princes refrained talking, and laid their hand on their mouth. When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me; because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on my righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame: I was a father to the poor. My root was spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branch.[n] Truly, the eye of the Lord was over him for good, and put a fence around all that he had.

Nor was Job a self-righteous man. He repeatedly

[n] Job xxix. 4—20.

acknowledged that he was himself a sinner before God; and we see in his holy fear for his children a steadfast reliance on God's appointed way of pardon and acceptance for the sinner through sacrifice.[o] And his record in heaven was, There is none like him in the earth, perfect and upright. We might have said, Here is a man who needs not trial. So just, and generous, and good—he is running a course of ever-deepening and widening beneficence that must needs be the best preparation for the heavenly kingdom. But God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor are His ways ours. This noble large-hearted man was as yet untried by adversity; and adversity is one of God's highest lesson-books in His upper school. It reveals man to himself, as nothing else can do; and Job at this time knew little of what was in his heart. He had learned one lesson by delightful experience, The Lord taketh pleasure in the prosperity of His servant. There was another he knew not, Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth. He would have been well content with such a journey home. He said, I shall die in my nest; I shall multiply my days as the sand.[p] And all outward things fostered the expectation.

[o] Job i. 5. [p] Job xxix. 18.

But, meanwhile, what a different scene was going on in the world of spirits! There the accuser of the brethren presented himself among the other sons of God, before Him who sate on the Throne; and, when challenged to admire the patriarch's fidelity, replied, Doth Job fear God for nought? But put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face. Surely, we learn from this glimpse within the veil how little we know all the designs of God in His dealings with us. Trial is by no means always for the sufferer's sake only; it is also for the sake of sympathizing kindred and affectionate friends and faithful servants. Nay, we are likewise a spectacle to angels;[q] and perhaps the knowledge of the manifold wisdom of God, which the Apostle says is revealed to the principalities and powers in heavenly places by the Church,[r] is not restricted to the angels of light. The Divine glory may be revealed to the condemnation of the powers of darkness by a Father's hand upholding the weakest of His children.

However, the permission which Satan besought is granted, and the immediate simultaneous calamities, which befell the patriarch's home, give us a fearful

[q] 1 Cor. iv. 9. [r] Eph. iii. 10.

insight into the tremendous energy and malignity of the spirit of evil. He could not, indeed, go a hair's-breadth beyond the limit assigned. But Job's prosperity was blighted in a day, and he began to tread with bleeding and trembling feet the pathway of trial. Still Satan was baffled. Job sinned not. His words of meek and holy resignation prove how truly his heart was right with God. But now the anguish must touch his person. His own wife became his tempter, and still he held fast his integrity; so marvellously is Divine strength made perfect in human weakness.

Haply, if Job had had no other auditors or spectators of his misery, the bitterness of his grief would have been suppressed within his own bosom; but when his friends came to him, after seven days of touching silence, he bewails his lot with passionate eloquence. This moves his friends to reply. Eliphaz reproves his fainting in the day of adversity, and argues his sorrows must be God's punishment for transgression. Bildad affirms that God will speedily restore him, if guiltless; and Zophar importunately urges him to repent. Job in his plaintive answers justifies his lamentations, and, while fully admitting man cannot stand before God, denies that he has committed iniquities to which

others might ascribe his calamities, and earnestly desires for himself to die in hope of a future resurrection. We learn, in passing, how ill we should choose for ourselves: had God taken Job at his word, what would not he have lost of after-blessedness, and the Church of priceless instruction? But his friends do not suffer him to rest. Eliphaz censures his self-justification; Bildad applies the doctrine of the retribution of the wicked to this righteous sufferer; and Zophar, in like spirit, declares that the triumphing of the ungodly is short. And now it is that, amid many moanings for his present griefs, Job speaks of his own sure hope beyond the grave in words which can never die: I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.[s]

[s] "The great passage in the book of Job," says Dr. Pusey, "is a confession intended for all times :—

O that my words were written, O that they were graven in a book, were cut with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!

Their most literal translation is:

And I, I know that my Redeemer liveth;
And that, the last, He shall rise above the dust;

Blessed patriarch! Though he was compassed with affliction on every side, though the Almighty had hidden His face from him for a season, though a dim vista of fifteen hundred years intervened between him and the accomplishment of that redemption to which he clung, yet was he unspeakably blessed. His afflictions, where are they now? His faith has received its earnest in the Paradise of God.

And after my skin they have destroyed this (*body*),
And from my flesh I shall behold God,
Whom I, I shall behold for myself,
And mine eyes shall behold and not another [lit. *a stranger*]
My reins are consumed within me.

"No doubtful meaning of any words can efface from the passage the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh. Whether *the dust* mean *the surface of the earth*, or *the dust* into which the human body *returns;* whether the *consuming* of the reins be, as elsewhere in Job, their actual consumption, or whether it be an idiom, although not occurring elsewhere, expressing that his inmost self was consumed with a longing for that day—this remains, that Job looked forward to a manifestation of his Redeemer at the end, with power, whether on the earth or over his own dust specially; that he knew that he himself for himself should gaze upon his God; and that after the destruction of his body he should with the eyes of his flesh behold Him."

When some modern critics so lightly throw doubt upon the meaning of a passage which has sustained the faith of the saints for more than 3000 years, it is refreshing to find one, who stands in the first rank of Hebrew scholars, triumphantly vindicating its grand significance. See also Bishop Wordsworth's notes.

What music in the ears of the captive, the debtor, the disinherited one, is the very name Redeemer! The Hebrew word (*Goel*) signifies to recover by paying the value, or to retribute and avenge, both of which offices belonged to the next kinsman; and thus admirably illustrates the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Had we not sold ourselves and become the prey of the mighty and the lawful captive of the enemy?[t] Could we redeem our own souls? Nay; in hopeless despair we must have let that alone for ever.[u] Is not our Emmanuel next of kin to us, who, seeing that the children were partakers of flesh and blood, Himself likewise took part of the same?[v] Did He not pay the ransom with His own inestimably precious life-blood?[w] Has He not avenged our captivity on the foe, whom He has despoiled?[x] Has He not redeemed our forfeited inheritance for us?[y] Yes, of all the lustrous names, which express the love of the Incarnate Son of God, none is more precious than Redeemer. The very vocabulary of the Gospel is in itself a glorious creation.

The after-progress of this historic poem lives in the

[t] Isa. xlix. 24. [u] Psalm xlix. 7. [v] Heb. ii. 16.
[w] 1 Pet. i. 19. [x] Col. ii. 15. [y] Eph. i. 14.

memory of all. The three friends of the patriarch continue to urge their remonstrances and doubts. Job reaffirms his integrity, his rare pursuit and discovery of wisdom, and his generous self-devotion; and he concludes his touching apology with an earnest desire that he might plead before God. Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar are silenced. But now Elihu, who had hitherto been a mute auditor, comes forward and shows the Fatherly dealing of God with His children: that His strokes are the tender chastisement of love; that God has found a ransom for man; and that it is man's part in trial to respond, That which I see not teach Thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do it no more; and above all and through all to trust Him where we cannot trace Him.[z] And now, as Elihu asks, Who teacheth like Him? it seems that God Himself approaches in a magnificent storm of thunder and whirlwind of cloud.[a] Hence this wise reprover contends for the incomprehensible majesty of Him with whom we have to do. But soon the Almighty Creator Himself takes up the argument and deigns to reason with His servant. Man was a creature of yes-

[z] Job xxxiii. 14—30; xxxiv. 32; xxxv. 14.

[a] Job xxxvii. 1—4.

terday; the works of God around him were in existence before he was born; and if we cannot fathom the glory of God's creation, how much less can we hope to explain all His dealings with the children of men? Is the animal world beyond our knowledge and control? How much the rather we ourselves, and the God who made us what we are? Job is confounded before the omnipotence of God; he is broken down; he lies in the very dust, a creature at the feet of his Creator, and can only cry, I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.[b]

Now God's purpose is fulfilled, and we are permitted to see the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.[c] Job prays for his friends. His prosperity returns. The Lord, we read, gave Job twice as much as he had before. His possessions were doubled. Ten more children were born unto him. "His children on earth were not indeed doubled to him in number," says Chrysostom,[d] "that he might not despair of seeing again the children he had lost, and in order that he might know that though

[b] Job xlii. 5, 6. [c] James v. 11.

[d] Chrysostom, quoted by Wordsworth.

they were taken from him they were still alive; and that we also might know that Job, who had buried ten children, and was himself buried by ten others, passed at death, as it were, from one home to another, and that all of them will stand with him together at the Great Day." [e]

Thus God exalted His servant in due season. The trial of his faith, though it was tried with fire, was found unto praise and honour and glory even here. And Job came to his grave as a shock of corn fully ripe, and is now awaiting the fulfilment of his own glowing prophecy, I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in my flesh I shall see God.

[e] It was in a like spirit of holy faith that the venerable saint, Mr. Biddulph of Bristol, when asked how many children he had, was wont to answer, "Two living ones and three dying ones: two living ones with Jesus, three dying ones with me."

THE VOICE OF THE SORROWERS.

WE brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord.

TWO voices have been heard, that of the Saviour saying, I am the resurrection and the life; and that of the holy dead, I know that my Redeemer liveth. Shall there be no response from the sorrowing mourners who are following the tabernacle of their beloved to its chamber of peace? Shall these voices from the Throne and from the Paradise of God awaken no echo on earth? Hearken, the widowed Church replies, We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord. We confess that we are strangers

and sojourners on the earth, as all our fathers were. We can call nothing earthly our own. We are stewards for a little while of the precious gifts entrusted to us by God. We came into the world naked and helpless. He clothed us with the goodly raiment of His bounty, and enriched us with innumerable tokens of His love. But these, though they are pledges of the robes of immortality and of the true riches of heaven, were given us in their present form only for the brief journey of life. Shall we marvel, shall we murmur, that as that journey closes with those we love, and as it will shortly close with ourselves, they and we are called to put off the travelling-dress and lay aside the treasures, which were entrusted to us for our use and delight on the roadway which lay betwixt us and our home?

The first clause of the response is from that noble passage in the epistle to Timothy where St. Paul, after sternly rebuking those who esteemed godliness for the sake of gain, affirms that godliness with contentment is great gain. Its merchandize is better than the merchandize of silver. For seeing that we can carry no worldly possessions with us when we die, our true riches must needs consist in things that will pass with

us through the gates of the grave, and not in the perishable things of time. With regard to earthly riches, let us only aim at having an unembarrassed journey till we reach our heavenly Fatherland. And having food and raiment (the very way in which the Apostle introduces the words implies that we shall have here all things needful for the body, for our Father knows our necessities before we ask Him), let us be therewith content. This, doubtless, is a lesson which we are learning all our pilgrim life, for the Lord leads us through the wilderness to humble us, and to prove us, and to teach us our daily dependence on His care. But never is the truth so stamped on our very soul as when we are following those we love to their last resting-place. Their mortal life and ours is then seen in its true character, as a vapour that appeareth for a little while and then vanisheth away. Here the pride of man is stained. What would all the wealth and pomp and glory of the world avail that lifeless corpse? What soon will it avail us, who live in houses of clay and are crushed before the moth?

The second clause of the Church's answer is from the devout resignation of the patriarch, whose prophetic faith had already formed the fittest expression for the

holy hope of the departed. It was when oxen and sheep and camels and servants and his seven sons and his three daughters were swept away in one day of unexampled calamity that we read, Job arose and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. Well may we who, like John in Patmos, are brothers and companions in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, learn submission to a Father's will at the feet of this great submissive mourner. His home was crushed, his life desolated, his summer turned into mid-winter, as in a moment; and yet it is recorded, In all this, Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly. Let us keep our heart with all diligence, that we in thought attribute no harshness, no shadow of harshness, to our God for any of His dealings with us. What He does we know not now, but we shall know hereafter. He gave us all that made life so lovely and loveable. Has He taken back one or many of those treasures, perhaps the most precious of all, into His own hands? Let us cling to the truth, It is His doing: the Lord

gave, and the Lord hath taken away. The same omniscient love, which first devised the gift and enriched our heart and home therewith, has now withdrawn it for a little season. Shall we not acknowledge it is the Lord? Nay, thus far Reason must confess on entering the sleeping-place of the dead. Is this all? Nay, Faith can add, Blessed be the name of the Lord. We thank Him for the inestimably precious loans for awhile confided to our care; for what are we that He should have trusted us with such happiness? We thank Him, though with trembling heart and tearful eye, that He has taken them now into His own safe keeping. For them who sleep in Jesus we know it is far better; and for ourselves we are assured, the darker the mystery the deeper the love. And yet more, Faith securely argues, The gifts of God are without repentance. As one has so sweetly sung,—

> It is no dream. By God that gift was given.
> Man may repent his gifts: God deals not thus;
> A new immortal joy is ours in heaven,
> For He who gave will give thee back to us.

We are in full view of the Resurrection of the just, when we confess the Lord hath taken away. Them

that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. And thus far, whether we regard the past bounties of our Father, or the present blessedness of those who are with Christ, or the consolations of the assurance for ourselves, He hath done all things well, or the future and eternal reunion of His children in His presence, we, though sorely bereaved, will and do look up to Him through the mist of tears, as we follow the body of our beloved beneath the doorway of His house of prayer, and say from the very ground of a broken but a childlike heart, Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Ours is the grief, who still are left in this far wilderness,
Which will at times, now they are gone, seem blank and comfortless.
For moments spent with loving hearts are breezes from the hills,
And the balm of Christian brotherhood like Eden's dew distils:
And we whose footsteps and whose hearts so often fail and faint,
Seem ill to spare the cheering voice of one departed saint.

But oh, we sorrow not like those whom no bright hopes sustain,
For them who sleep in Jesus, God will with Him bring again.
Love craves the presence and the sight of all its well-beloved,
And therefore weep we in the homes whence they are far removed;

Love craves the presence and the sight of each beloved one,
And therefore Jesus spake the word which caught them to His throne :—
"Father, I will that all My own, which thou hast granted Me,
Be with Me where I am to share My glory's bliss with Thee."

Thus heaven is gathering, one by one, in its capacious breast,
All that is pure and permanent, and beautiful and blest ;
The family is scatter'd yet, though of one home and heart,
Part militant in earthly gloom, in heavenly glory part.
But who can speak the rapture, when the circle is complete
And all the children sunder'd now around One Father meet ?
One fold, One Shepherd, one employ, one everlasting home :
"Lo ! I come quickly." "Even so, Amen : Lord Jesus, come."

PART II.

IN THE HOUSE OF GOD.

THE patriarch's words of holy resignation, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord*—have hardly died upon the wind, ere we enter the stillness of the house of God. There is a sheltered and hallowed feeling about the courts of prayer, which is inexpressibly soothing and supporting. Perhaps on this very spot the one we mourn has often worshipped with us in happy days gone by; or, if not, it is in the sanctuary of God that we are wont to see the things of time in the calm light of eternity. There, with Asaph of old, over the waves of this troublesome world we

have caught the sweet music of the harp of inspiration, Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. And now, for the last time, till the day break and the shadows flee away, we are side by side with the mortal tabernacle of our beloved. Here we can the better grapple with things as they are—our deep desolation, and our deeper consolation. And here, in the house of God, our Church only asks us to meditate on the pure Word of God.

¶ *After they are come into the Church, shall be read one or both of these Psalms following.*

Dixi, custodiam.—Ps. xxxix.

I SAID, I will take heed to my ways: that I offend not in my tongue.

I will keep my mouth as it were with a bridle: while the ungodly is in my sight.

I held my tongue, and spake nothing: I kept silence, yea, even from good words; but it was pain and grief to me.

My heart was hot within me, and while I was thus musing the fire kindled: and at the last I spake with my tongue;

Lord, let me know mine end, and the number of my days: that I may be certified how long I have to live.

Behold, Thou hast made my days as it were a span long: and mine age is even as nothing in respect of Thee; and verily every man living is altogether vanity.

For man walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain : he heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who shall gather them.

And now, Lord, what is my hope : truly my hope is even in Thee.

Deliver me from all mine offences : and make me not a rebuke unto the foolish.

I became dumb, and opened not my mouth : for it was Thy doing.

Take Thy plague away from me : I am even consumed by means of Thy heavy hand.

When Thou with rebukes dost chasten man for sin, Thou makest his beauty to consume away, like as it were a moth fretting a garment : every man therefore is but vanity.

Hear my prayer, O Lord, and with Thine ears consider my calling : hold not Thy peace at my tears.

For I am a stranger with Thee : and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.

O spare me a little, that I may recover my strength before I go hence and be no more seen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost ;

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be : world without end. Amen.

A LAMENT OF DAVID.

HIS outcry of the soul to God is from the innermost heart of David. It is a Psalm which confesses all the misery of this mortal life, and unhesitatingly speaks of man's sorrow as flowing from man's sin; and yet beneath all there is a clinging trust in God, the living God, which argues a hope beyond the grave. The appeal is the more powerful from the suppression of thought: so little is said, so much is breathed.

This Psalm is most closely associated with the one before it—the thirty-eighth; and from comparing the two we discover that it was a time of sore affliction with the grieved and wounded poet. The hand of the Lord was pressing him sore. He had been brought nigh unto death. His lovers and friends stood aloof from him. His enemies were whispering against him

and watching for his halting. And what darkened and deepened every grief was the conviction that the chastening was because of sin. Thus he says, in the earlier Psalm, I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin;[a] and in the later he implies the same, When Thou with rebukes dost chasten man for sin, Thou makest his beauty to consume away like as it were a moth fretting a garment. Truly all God's billows and waves were going over him.

For a long while the Psalmist pent up his feelings. "He could not bare his bosom to the rude gaze of an unsympathizing world."[b] He feared lest by murmuring or distrust he should give occasion to those who desired occasion; and so, like a strong rider curbing a chafed and impetuous steed, he kept his mouth, as it were, with a bridle. This, however, only doubled his grief; and at last he could bear this repression no more. He must speak, if not to man, to God. He prays that he may know the frailty and brevity of life. He would fain measure time by that which is beyond time, and compare things seen and human with things unseen and Divine.

God answers his prayer. And truly the teaching

[a] Ps. xxxviii. 18. [b] *See* Perowne on this Psalm.

vouchsafed is such as may humble us in the very dust. The span of our life is but a handbreadth. The age of man is as nothing before the eternity of God. Yea, man at his best estate is altogether vanity. All flesh is grass, and the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: for the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat than it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth.[c] Man, therefore, walketh in a vain shadow. For this is a world of delusive unrealities and of fleeting images, of fruitless disquietudes, and of unremaining possessions.

Is then the wayfarer along this chequered and shadowy pathway utterly baffled and cast down? Nay, see how his faith grapples with and lays hold on the certainty of God, while he exclaims, And now, Lord, what is my hope? truly my hope is even in Thee. All earthly things are shifting and changing and passing away: God is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Now in the presence of God all things are seen in their true character and dimensions. Sin was his deepest grief; but now he can pray for pardon and purity and peace. He looks up into the face of

[c] Isa. xl. 6; James i. 11.

his forgiving Father and confesses the secret reason of his silence, I became dumb, and opened not my mouth, for it was Thy doing. And now, even while he makes his moan to God, he pleads for sparing mercy, and surely with no feeble expectation of an answer of peace. How often is it so with us? We know not why He has done it; for He giveth not account of His matters to us. We are stunned at the time with the stroke of His hand, and even afterwards can hardly spell out with many tears the reason of His Providence. But we know his Fatherly heart of love towards us, and we can and do rest on the words, Thou didst it.

And now the Psalm closes with a still more earnest appeal to God's pitying mercy: Hear my prayer, O Lord, and with Thine ears consider my calling; hold not Thy peace at my tears. It is a child clinging to a parent's breast: the petition, the cry, the tears all plead with the father's yearning heart. Yea, there is a further plea: For I am a stranger with Thee and a sojourner, as all my fathers were: a stranger, one who is but a passing guest; a wayfaring man, who turns aside to tarry for a night;[d] a sojourner, who abides for

[d] Jer. xiv. 8.

a little while in a country, but whose home is not there, whose fatherland is far away. Thus David, like Abraham on the death of Sarah, and Jacob before Pharaoh's throne, and Moses in the land of Midian,[e] confesses himself a stranger and pilgrim on the earth. It was the same thought which humbled him in the very dust when offering his magnificent gifts for the temple before God: But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee; for we are strangers with Thee and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding.[f] This language of faith, says Dr. Kay, rests on the Divine word, The land shall not be sold for ever; for the land is Mine: for ye are strangers and sojourners with Me.[g] They might not claim the land as *theirs*, lest they should forget that they were *His*—His pilgrim guests, for whom He had provided a better country. I am a stranger with Thee—wilt Thou forget the tears of an exile who is under Thy protection? Wilt Thou not show

e Gen. xxiii. 4; xlvii. 9. Exod. ii. 22.

f 1 Chron. xxix. 14, 15.

g Lev. xxv. 23.

mercy to one who is travelling through a waste land to dwell with Thee for ever?

There remains but one desire more: O spare me a little, that I may recover strength (literally, *that I may brighten up again,* like the sky at the dawn of morning) before I go hence; like a traveller whose journey is finished; and be no more seen. Such is the Prayer-book version. In our Bibles we simply read from the Hebrew—*and be no more.* The allusion is probably to the record of Enoch's translation, of whom it is said, *He was not, for God took him.*[h] Whether by translation or by death, the saints are taken to be with God, and their place on earth shall know them no more till the morning of the resurrection.

The whole Psalm is a persistent clinging to God amid all the shadows of a world of sin and sorrow. The central words, And now, Lord, what is my hope? truly my hope is even in Thee, are the keystone of the arch. The believer has calmly measured his mortal life, its brevity and frailty; brief at the longest, and even for that brief space exposed to a thousand dangers, any one of which might abruptly close it. He

[h] Gen. v. 24.

has learned to read it aright as the day of grace, the accepted time of salvation. He has himself fled for refuge to the blood-stained mercy-seat; and a voice has spoken to his heart from the excellent glory, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee. He has looked up and met the smile of his reconciling God and Father in Christ. It is a mighty word of faith, still he can say it—I flee unto Thee to hide me.[1] And now he does not fear to survey the things of time in the light of a nearer eternity. He recognizes his true position before God—I am a stranger with Thee. He does not indeed seek to be quit of life's burden till his hour shall come; but rather, feeling how much remains to be done in him and by him, will pray with David, O spare me a little before I go hence. When, however, the Master shall call him, his hope is one which will not make him ashamed. Is not faith conversant with things unseen? Is not his love fixed on One in whom, though now he sees Him not, yet believing, he rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory? Death will only bring him face to face with all those verities among which he has moved in spirit so long. It is indeed an unutterably solemn thing to die. The

[1] Ps. cxliii. 9.

Christian believer will have no sympathy with those who speak lightly of death (a levity probably shown only when death is thought to be far away, and exchanged for abject terror when it is known to be near), but he knows that Christ Jesus has abolished death, and shed a heavenly light upon life and immortality in the Gospel. Just across the river lies the Paradise of the Blessed Dead, and beyond this are the cloudless ages of an eternity of bliss. His soul may faint under the thought of the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, but this word sustains him now and will sustain him for ever, And now, Lord, what is my hope? truly my hope is even in Thee.

The Gloria which is appended to the Psalm in our Service, ascribing co-equal and co-eternal praise to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, crowns the faith of the saints of the elder covenant with the clearer revelation vouchsafed to us in the Gospel. Even of old the Throne of God was the believer's refuge, for, though clouds and darkness were round about Him, righteousness and judgment were known to be the habitation of His seat. But now there is a rainbow round about the Throne in sight like unto an

emerald, and in its softened light we, through Jesus Christ, have access by One Spirit unto the Father.

Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.—Ps. xxxvii. 7.

Rest in the Lord; rest, weary heart,
With sin and sorrow worn,
And conscience rankling with the smart
Of pitiless self-scorn:
Oh, counting all beside but loss
Climb Calvary's lowly hill,
And there beside the bleeding Cross
Rest, and be still.

Rest in the Lord, what time the storm
Around thy pathway raves,
Behold His calm majestic Form
Serenely walks the waves;
And hark! that tranquil voice is heard
Which winds and waves fulfil:
Oh, rest upon His changeless word,
Rest, and be still.

Rest in the Lord, although the sands
Of life are running low,
Though clinging hearts and clasping hands
May not detain thee now:

His hand is on thee : death's alarms
Can never work thee ill :
Rest in His everlasting arms,
Rest, and be still.

Rest in the Lord : no conflicts more,
The latest labour done,
The weary strife for ever o'er,
The crown for ever won.
Beside the crystal stream, that flows
From Zion's heavenly hill,
Rest in eternal Love's repose,
Rest, and be still.

A PRAYER OF MOSES.

Domine, refugium.—Ps. xc.

LORD, Thou hast been our refuge : from one generation to another.

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made : Thou art God from everlasting, and world without end.

Thou turnest man to destruction : again Thou sayest, Come again, ye children of men.

For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday : seeing that is past as a watch in the night.

As soon as Thou scatterest them, they are even as a sleep : and fade away suddenly like the grass.

In the morning it is green, and groweth up : but in the evening it is cut down, dried up, and withered.

For we consume away in Thy displeasure : and are afraid at Thy wrathful indignation.

Thou hast set our misdeeds before Thee : and our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance.

For when Thou art angry all our days are gone : we bring our years to an end, as it were a tale that is told.

The days of our age are threescore years and ten : and though men be so strong, that they come to fourscore years : yet is their strength then but labour and sorrow ; so soon passeth it away, and we are gone.

But who regardeth the power of Thy wrath : for even thereafter as a man feareth, so is Thy displeasure.

O teach us to number our days : that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

Turn Thee again, O Lord, at the last : and be gracious unto Thy servants.

O satisfy us with Thy mercy, and that soon : so shall we rejoice and be glad all the days of our life.

Comfort us again now after the time that Thou hast plagued us : and for the years wherein we have suffered adversity.

Shew Thy servants Thy work : and their children Thy glory.

And the glorious Majesty of the Lord our God be upon us : prosper Thou the work of our hands upon us, O prosper Thou our handy-work.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son : and to the Holy Ghost ;

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be : world without end. Amen.

THIS Psalm bears the title of "A Prayer of Moses, the man of God." Nor has the most searching criticism brought anything of real value to shake the faith of the Church in this cherished tradition of her children. It consists of two principal parts. The first twelve verses are a meditation on the eternity of God in contrast with the frailty and transitoriness of man. The immortal God is the home of mortal man. The last five verses plead for compassion and mercy, and humbly anticipate beauty for

ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

Of this Psalm Isaac Taylor writes:—"It may be cited as perhaps the most sublime of human compositions, the deepest in feeling, the loftiest in theologic conception, the most magnificent in its imagery. True it is in its report of human life, as troubled, transitory, and sinful. True in its conception of the Eternal, the Sovereign and the Judge, and yet the refuge and the hope of men, who, notwithstanding the most severe trials of their faith, lose not their confidence in Him, but pray for, as if they were predicting, a near-at-hand season of refreshment. Wrapt, one might say, in mystery, until the distant day of revelation should come, there is here conveyed the doctrine of Immortality; for in this very plaint of the brevity of the life of man, and of the sadness of these his few years of trouble, there is brought into contrast the Divine Immutability; and yet it is in terms of a submissive piety: the thought of a life eternal is here in embryo."[j]

My own deep conviction is that this Psalm was written by Moses some time during his forty years' exile in the land of Midian. It reflects the experience

[j] The Spirit of the Hebrew Poetry, p. 161.

of contemplative private life rather than that of a legislative ruler. It is a pilgrim, not a prince, who is speaking. There is no allusion to the triumphant Exodus of Israel. The mountains in his eye[k] were probably those at the base of which he was pasturing the flocks of Jethro. It is far more probable that he would speak of the average age of man, as he does in the tenth verse, before he himself and Aaron and Miriam had passed the limit of fourscore years in undeclining strength. The affliction which he mourns[l] was the bondage of his people in Egypt, from which he still clung to the hope that God by his hand would deliver them. And, indeed, the whole Psalm might be condensed in two words, the names which Moses gave to his two sons in Midian—Gershom, Eliezer—which signify *a stranger here;*[m] for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land; and *my God is an help*—the noble confession of one who endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

To this thought the opening sentence gives utterance, Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. We are so customed to the sound of the words, *in all generations*, that we almost forget

[k] V. 2. [l] V. 15. [m] Exod. xviii. 3, 4.

the witness they bear to the solemn reign of death. Generation passeth away and generation cometh, but the earth abideth for ever.[n] And yet in this passing and perishable world we have a sure and abiding retreat. The word, translated "dwelling-place," implies both home and refuge, and is rendered by this last word in Deut. xxxiii. 27, The Eternal God is thy *refuge*, and underneath are the everlasting arms. There is something very beautiful in the same word recurring after forty years and more, and being left, after all the vicissitudes of the wilderness, as a rich legacy by Moses to Israel, when himself about to die and go to the pilgrim's bourne.

Our dwelling-place, our home—consider what the word implies. It is our home where we are at ease. There we feel no irksomeness nor constraint. It is our habitual, almost instinctive resort. There we find rest after toil. Storms may be rife abroad, but there is shelter. We may be misunderstood by strangers, but not at home: there we are known and loved.

Sweet is the smile of home, the mutual look,
Where hearts are of each other sure;
Sweet all the joys that crowd the household nook,
The haunt of all affections pure.

[n] Eccl. i. 4.

He must be lost indeed in whose breast the word *home* does not awaken a true response. That lingering look homeward was the first sign of the prodigal's repentance.[o] However far we journey in our own or foreign climes,

> The heart untravell'd fondly turns to home.

We may pass through far more beautiful scenery, or sojourn in far more splendid mansions replete with a thousand luxuries, but they are not our home, and we leave them without a tear. Yea, much of the former joy of our dwelling-place may be shadowed, and the ringing voice of laughter there be hushed, still it is our home; there we fain would dwell while we are God's exiles; and there we fain would die, for it is to us the dearest type on earth of the many mansions of our Father's house.

And is this the word which Moses chose to express what God is to His people? It is. If we ask, Whence learned he this faith? Doubtless from Jochebed, his mother-nurse. She would tell of Abraham and Isaac, and Jacob and Joseph, of his fathers and of his fathers' God, until the trust of the royal foundling was anchored in God, the living God, a God who invited

[o] Luke xv. 17.

access to Himself by sacrifice and prayer. In this faith he forsook the proud allurements of Egypt, and nursed those lonely and lofty thoughts, while being prepared of God for his work, as an exile in the land of Midian.

But now we must contemplate with Moses the solemn contrast between the eternity of God and the transitoriness of man.[p] It is almost overwhelming. The picture is drawn with a master's hand. A few brief touches, and man is in the very dust before the awful majesty of his Maker.

We are first brought to face the everlasting unchangeableness of God. We are transported back to an undefined undescribed stand-point, before the foundations of the world were laid. And God was then as now. How shall we climb up to the thought in mere respect of the lapse of time? Shall we compare God with man made after His image and similitude? Do years compel reverence? Is the hoary head a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness? Alas! how soon the old man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets, for the silver cord is loosed, and the golden

[p] Vv. 2—6.

bowl is broken. But if there were amongst us a venerable statesman, whose eye, like that of Moses, was not dim, nor his natural force abated at the age of six-score years, what homage would not be rightly paid him in the senate of his land? Or if the life of the shortest lived of the patriarchs before the flood, Enoch,[q] were realized in any great and good man, who would not flock to his gate? He would be the Nestor of the world. Or if the tradition, which was baseless, had been well-grounded of the beloved John tarrying on earth till the second Advent, what profound deference would have been accorded to the words of one who had spoken to Jesus and leaned on His bosom? What is all this, however, to the contemplation of the eternity of God? It is mounting some laboriously built scaffold; it is climbing to the ridge of some cathedral roof; it is toiling to the snowy summit of some Alpine range; it is the aeronaut ascending above the clouds—to be a little nearer the blue crystal heavens by day or the starry firmament by night. A little nearer: how much? And do all our efforts bring us nearer the conception of the High and Lofty One who in-

[q] Gen. v. 23.

habiteth eternity? At the remotest limit of our researches, baffling our pride, the words echo around us, From everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God. And from the immeasurable ages of the past is heard the voice of God Himself, I am that I am.

Behold this on the right hand: now look on the left and see the transient, fugitive, perishable life of man.[r] The everlasting Jehovah holds His frail creature in the hollow of His hand. His primeval sentence is being perpetually fulfilled, Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return. Yea, had man lived a millennial day, what would it have been before Him in whose sight a thousand years are but as yesterday and a watch of the night? The most fleeting images shadow forth our life the best, a flood, a sleep, the blossom of grass. Death hurries us away, as a swollen winter torrent tears the sapling from the bank. Our days are as a passing slumber; our beauty is as the flower of the meadow grass. This is no Mirza's dream only. The bridge of life is thronged with evanescent forms. If we look upon the world and all its glory, we must needs swell the plaint of the Royal Preacher, Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.

[r] Vv. 3–6.

But did God create man for the sport of an hour? Did He implant within us this comprehensive mind, these throbbing affections, this nimble imagination, this umpire conscience, this viceregal will, that when we breathed our last they should vanish into thin air, like smoke from the chimney? Did He form this God-like creature that he should die like the brutes that perish? Is this like God? Is this worthy of Omniscient wisdom and of Almighty love?

The shadows must grow deeper yet before we turn to the light. There is a sad and solemn reason for God thus dealing with man. Sin entered into the world, and death by sin. The land was as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness. How momentous is the process of thought in the verses that follow.[8] The reason of man's transitory life is herein plainly unequivocally affirmed: it is none other than man's sin and God's wrath. Our mortality cannot be denied by the world. Earth is furrowed with innumerable graves. You cannot hide, if you would, our churchyards and cemeteries. Our sepulchral monuments are death's trophies. Stoical ignorance may call death the debt of nature. O

[8] Vv. 7—11.

melancholy untruth! Just as if the judicial divorce of that body and spirit, which God Himself made one man, were a necessary fact in our history, and not a sentence necessary indeed by reason of sin, but in itself most abnormal and abhorrent to our nature.

Very different are the words of Moses: We consume away in Thy displeasure. Thou hast set our misdeeds before Thee. When Thou art angry, all our days are gone. Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. We cannot hide our guilt from the searching light of God's countenance. O terrible truth! Our sin is bad enough in our eyes, who are so dim-sighted and so indulgent to our own faults. It were far worse for a fellow-man to be able to track every imagination of our wayward heart; but what is it when conscience slowly re-echoes the words, Thou, Lord, hast searched me and known me?[t] God requires truth and love and peace and joy and harmony in the temple of our soul; and what does He find in the natural man? Sin, distrust, discord—in one word, ungodliness—sometimes breaking out into open transgressions; at others, concealed as a secret alienation from Himself, the Source of all light and blessedness. And what

[t] Ps. cxxxix. 1.

must needs follow? Indignation, wrath, punishment, death. The wages of sin is death.

And hence the Psalmist returns to his mournful meditations on man's frailty: We spend our years as a tale that is told. The opening of the narrative engages the listener: the interest deepens; the plot thickens; the crisis soon arrives; it passes: the remaining incidents quickly succeed; and the curtain falls. The tale is told: there is silence again. Such is man's life. Youth and age alike are called away. But be its period the longest—say life is extended to its seventy or even eighty years—how soon it is gone! The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, and the place thereof shall know it no more.

Shall we then say, Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die? Nay, the opening words, Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations, govern and dominate the whole meditation. See how nobly faith grapples with this awful vanity of human life. Hearken to that cry which is wrung from the heart of the suppliant, So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. It is true that our days are as a shadow that declineth. Do not hide the truth; do not gloss it over; there is no

comfort in that. But another truth—as strong, yea, far stronger—demands your recognition. There is that which is imperishable, and man may grasp it. There is a heavenly wisdom, which can enable mortal man to lay hold on the immortality of God; and in the midst of these our passing school-days we may make the charter our own of an eternal inheritance. If once we master this Divine arithmetic, it reverses all; for this wisdom, that descendeth from above, tells of a present portion in God and of a hope beyond the grave. The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.[u]

We now enter on the concluding portion of the Psalm. No sooner is the prayer uttered for wisdom—no sooner would the suppliant learn the lessons which God would teach by the discipline of mortal life—than faith waxes stronger and bolder, and grasps hold of the certainty of God. Return, O Lord: how long? and let it repent Thee concerning Thy servants. It seems as if Thy sentence against us had gone forth. We all do fade as a leaf. Thy hand is heavy upon us. Thy face is averted from us in displeasure. But turn Thee unto us again: show the light of Thy counte-

[u] 1 John ii. 17.

nance; and we shall be saved. How long? This is not impatience, but humility. It is saying, While it is Thy pleasure to afflict us, we must lie still; but how long wilt Thou be angry with Thy people that prayeth? Let it repent Thee. It is no hard inexorable fate against which we struggle in vain; but it is a loving Father's hand which is chastening us. We know not all His counsels, but we know His heart. We shall not, we cannot, cry to Him in vain. But far more follows. From the lowest humiliation springs one of the loveliest prayers in all Scripture: O satisfy us early with Thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Has the knowledge of our fading mortality humbled us in the very dust before the Throne of the Eternal? Has the Blessed Spirit convinced us of that sin from which all sorrow springs? Have we, under the sense of our own personal sin, returned to God, our forgiving Father, who welcomes the contrite at the blood-stained mercy-seat? There is pardon for us and peace and power: pardon for all the past, through the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world; peace now, a peace that passes understanding, with Him who reconciles us to Himself through the Son of His

love; and power for all that is to come, even the power of His life-giving, life-fostering, life-sustaining Spirit. All is wrapt up in this one marvellous word, Mercy.

Mercy, O Lord, mercy I ask:
This is the total sum:
For mercy, Lord, is all my plea;
Lord, let Thy mercy come.

Nor is this only when first the soul finds mercy at the foot of the cross. It must be our daily prayer whilst we are at home in the body. *Give us* must ever be followed by *Forgive us*, till we come into our Father's presence. Thus only shall we share Naphtali's prophetic benediction, satisfied with favour and full of the blessing of the Lord.[v] This is the honey from the stony rock which fills the hungry soul with plenteousness.[w] And the issue is, That we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Can this be the expression of the same lips which uttered those words of bitter lament over man's uncertain and unremaining life so shortly before? Yes, this is the triumph of redeeming love. Notwithstanding all that has been confessed, and justly confessed, of this perishable world, the joys of

v Deut. xxxiii. 23. w Ps. lxxxi. 16.

the children of God are deeper than their sorrows ; for their sorrows are temporal, their joys eternal. Let their conversation regarding the home to which they are travelling bear witness. They use their sorrows to tell what heaven will not be ; they use their joys to tell what heaven will be ; and, therefore, though the path be often rugged and thorny, the redeemed of the Lord return with singing unto Zion, for they know that they shall obtain gladness and joy, and that sorrow and mourning shall flee away.[x]

Confidence begets confidence ; and now the Psalmist prays,—Comfort us again now after the time that Thou hast plagued us, and for the years wherein we have suffered adversity. Have we, then, any claim on God for compensation, because of affliction ? Nay, verily. But can we found any plea upon our griefs ? In this respect only : we are children dealing with a father, not prisoners in the hand of a jailer. Our Father's heart is towards us. We seem to hear His communings with Himself, Is Ephraim my dear son ? is he a pleasant child ? for since I spake against him I do earnestly remember him still ; therefore my bowels are troubled for him : I will surely have

[x] Isa. li. 11.

mercy on him, saith the Lord.[y] Is it, then, that we are passing through suffering and bereavement? We may humbly and reverently look for that sanctifying consolation which our Father designs. If, as I believe, this Psalm was written in Midian, what meaning the words would have for Moses and for Israel. For long weary years they had seen evil; and yet were they the children of Abraham, the friend of God, and heirs of glorious world-wide promises. And Moses was as a watcher for the morning, who remembers the glories of the sunset through the tedious and dark vigils of the night, and is now gazing on the twilight glimmer in the eastern sky. Nor did the cry go up from Moses' heart alone. And the answer came, I have heard their cry, I have seen their affliction, I know their sorrows. God arose for their help, and a race of scattered down-trodden slaves became a nation of kings and priests. And as it was with Israel, so shall it be with us. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy, gathering many a wave-sheaf here, and reaping the abundant harvest hereafter.

The contrite and trustful heart can bear stronger consolation still. And now the chastened soul dares

[y] Jer. xxxi. 20,

to pray, Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children. Compare this with the former lament, Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance, and it seems altogether a new world. It is a new world. Faith transforms us. The eyes of the heart are opened. Whereas we were blind, now we see. If this was the prayer of Moses in Midian, how wondrous the answer to him and his people! The burning bush, the signs of embassy, the rod of power, miracle after miracle, Egypt smitten, the sea cleft asunder, manna from heaven, water from the rock, the law given amid the thunders of Sinai, the pillar of fire and cloud leading them for forty years, until the suppliant who uttered these words saw from Pisgah the goodly land of promise, even to Lebanon. And is not the prayer as really fulfilled to the believer now? Jesus ever with him, the power of the Spirit resting upon him, all things working together for his good, the bread of life sustaining him, the living water refreshing him, his foes (though they are the principalities and powers of darkness) continually baffled, the angels of light ministering to him, the music of the Gospel promises heard around him, and

when he draws near to Jordan the sweet assurance that the ark of the covenant is there, and that the waters shall not overflow him.

And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us, yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it. Thus this Psalm, which began in clinging affiance, and descended into the lowest valley of humiliation, and struggled upward in persistent prayer, closes with heavenly joy and triumphant expectation. The chastened saint pleads to be clothed with the beauty of God. The very word *beauty* fascinates us:—

> A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.
> Its loveliness increases: it will never
> Pass into nothingness.

But nothing can be more beautiful than the mind which designed it. I am persuaded that every one can express the image of beauty which he conceives, whether it be the speaker with his living voice, or the author with his pen, or the sculptor with his chisel, or the painter with his brush, or the musician with his instrument. He may not succeed the first time, or the second, or the third, or even the tenth or twentieth time. He is conscious that his attainment falls short

of his ideal. But he draws nearer and nearer: he corrects mistake after mistake; and, if he have perseverance, he may at last express in words or writing, he may limn or paint, or breathe in simple melodies and intricate harmonies, the original image of beauty which has been all the while in his inmost soul. But no author or artist ever transcended the thoughts which—whether they first came to him from within or from without—he has conceived. Nothing can be more beautiful than the mind which designed it. O what, then, must His beauty be who designed all? Every form of loveliness, every delight of harmony, every combination of moral and spiritual goodness, has come from Him and must be in Him. The Beauty of Holiness is a very name of God Himself.[z] And this is the supremest loveliness. Exquisite as form and colour and tone may be, every one instinctively confesses that spiritual beauty is far more excellent. Among all good men, purity of heart, tenderness, truth, unselfishness, generosity, nobility of mind, or to sum up all in one word—love, such affections and dispositions are felt to be far lovelier than the most fascinating attractions which appeal to the eye or the

[z] 2 Chron. xx. 21.

ear. And if human virtue is thus beautiful, what must His beauty be, in whom all excellences combine, all truthfulness and all tenderness, all purity and all compassion, all goodness and all grace, Who is Life, and Light, and Love?

We must realize this ere we can grasp the majesty of this prayer of faith, The beauty of the Lord our God be upon us. It is the glory of the children of God to be God-like: Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven, is perfect.[a] It is the high prerogative of Christians to be Christ-like: Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.[b]

Moses little thought, when he breathed this prayer in Midian, it would be so literally fulfilled in himself; that from intercourse with God, his very face would catch the reflection of the Divine glory.[c] And yet in the higher world of spiritual beauty this may be, this will be the attainment of the humblest suppliant at the mercy-seat, for We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.[d]

[a] Matt. v. 48.
[b] Rom. xiii. 14.
[c] Exod. xxxiv. 29, 30.
[d] 2 Cor. iii. 18.

Walking with God leads to working for God. Faith loves to labour. It is no dreamy fruitless speculation. It comes down from the mount and toils in the wilderness. Nor is the work ever vain. God prospers it. God establishes it. Moses' occupation when he led the flocks of Jethro along the ravines of Horeb, even when we remember the dignity of the Eastern shepherd, might well seem humble to one brought up in the palace of the Pharaohs. Yet being found faithful there, he was armed with miraculous credentials; he led his people through the Red Sea, he communed with God on Sinai, and after his marvellous leadership of forty years, he yielded up his spirit on Pisgah to God, and was buried with such a funeral as has been accorded to no other of the sons of men. May we take up the lowly duties God has assigned us; take them up cheerfully, prayerfully, hopefully, in Christ's name. We are labourers together with God.[e] He selected our work for us. He will prosper it. Yea, He will establish it. This alone is permanent in a shifting, changing, dying world. I have ordained you that ye should bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain. The world passeth away, and the lust

[e] 1 Cor. iii. 9.

thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

The *Gloria* crowns this Psalm, like the last, with the halo of that Triune Name, into which we are baptized in the covenant of the everlasting Gospel. What true heart that has responded to the Psalm, does not swell the loud Amen?

O God, the Rock of Ages,
Who evermore hast been,
What time the tempest rages,
Our dwelling-place serene:
Before Thy first creations,
O Lord, the same as now,
To endless generations
The Everlasting Thou!

Our years are like the shadows
On sunny hills that lie,
Or grasses in the meadows
That blossom but to die:
A sleep, a dream, a story
By strangers quickly told,
An unremaining glory
Of things that soon are old.

O Thou, who canst not slumber,
Whose light grows never pale,
Teach us aright to number
Our years before they fail.

On us Thy mercy lighten,
  On us Thy goodness rest,
And let Thy Spirit brighten
  The hearts Thyself hast bless'd.

Lord, crown our faith's endeavour
  With beauty and with grace,
Till, clothed in light for ever,
  We see Thee face to face :
A joy no language measures ;
  A fountain brimming o'er ;
An endless flow of pleasures ;
  An ocean without shore.

RESURRECTION ARGUED BY ST. PAUL.

¶ *Then shall follow the Lesson taken out of the Fifteenth Chapter of the former Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians.*

1 Cor. xv. 20.

NOW is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.

For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits: afterward they that are Christ's at His coming: then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For He hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith, all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead? and why

stand we in jeopardy every hour? I protest by your rejoicing, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. Be not deceived; evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.

But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body, as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed His own body.

All flesh is not the same flesh; but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.

There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory.

So also is the resurrection of the dead: It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body; and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit, that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the

kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump (for the trumpet shall sound), and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality; then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

(1) CHRIST THE FIRST-FRUITS.

NOW is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.

NO sooner have the latest echoes of Moses' prayer been hushed in our Burial Service, than we are summoned by our Church in a yet stronger grasp of faith to grapple with the Apostle Paul's triumphant argument for the resurrection of the dead.

He had spoken in the first seven verses of this chapter of the great facts which lie as the immoveable foundation-stones of our holy faith:—the death of Christ for our sins; His burial; His resurrection the third day; His repeated appearances to chosen and faithful witnesses; and, last of all, to himself on the way to Damascus. It is the fashion in the present day to decry books on the evidences of Christianity. Some learned men speak slightingly of Paley, and

rather appeal to subtle adaptations of thought, and to an inner verifying consciousness. But such is not the teaching of the Apostle. This is a chapter which eminently reveals the unseen. If this were blotted out, there would be blanks which we could fill up from no other part of Scripture. Now, this chapter, which introduces us to so much which we cannot bring to the proof of our senses, bases itself on great facts, facts which took place on earth, facts which men could vouch for, and which rested on the incontrovertible evidence of faithful eye-witnesses. To this evidence St. Paul now appeals in declaring again that Gospel, of which he had been the herald and ambassador at Corinth. This charter of eternal life, sealed by the death of Christ and ratified by His resurrection, the Corinthians embraced on their conversion: therein they stood: and thereby they would obtain everlasting life, unless indeed they believed in vain, either through the facts on which they relied proving baseless, which was impossible, or through their reliance itself proving a spurious faith, which the Apostle would not believe.

The death of Christ for our sins was that which St. Paul delivered unto them first of all; for, though he

shunned not to declare unto them the whole counsel of God, all revolved around the death of Jesus Christ. This death was for our sins. He, as man's Surety, had undertaken to answer for man. The life of sinful man was forfeited. He therefore, the Second Adam, if He would redeem man, must, though Himself sinless, die in the sinner's place. This redemption He accomplished on the cross. There He died for our sins, atoning for their guilt, and casting down the barrier which they had erected betwixt God and us. And He died thus *according to the Scriptures*, as typified by the earliest sacrifices, as shadowed forth in all the Jewish ritual, as relied on by the faithful in every age, and as more expressly foretold by Isaiah and Daniel.

This was the first great article of the Christian faith. And the second was like unto it—the burial and glorious resurrection of the crucified Redeemer. The fact of His burial was predicted by Isaiah[f] and by the type of Jonah,[g] and is narrated by the evangelists with a precision which bespeaks its solemn import in God's sight. But we perhaps hardly realize all its consolation until we commit to the silent grave the tabernacle of those we love as our own soul, or are

[f] Isa. liii. 9, 10.

[g] Matt. xii. 40.

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ourselves about to pass through the valley of the shadow of death. Our Master has travelled that road. His footprints are there.

But the sepulchre was only the portal of Easter. Christ, through the grave and gate of death, passed to His joyful resurrection. This prophecy fore-announced; for David sang, Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades, neither wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption,[h] implying a sojourn in the tomb of less than four days;[i] and Hosea, regarding Christ and His people as one, declares, In the third day He will raise us up;[j] and the words of our Lord Himself, as recorded in St. Matthew's Gospel, which was already received among the Canonical Scriptures, were repeated and express.[k] Of the appearance of the risen Christ, the Apostle gives six distinct instances. He was seen (1) of Cephas (Peter), as recorded by St. Luke; (2) of the Twelve (so called from their original number, though Judas was lost and Thomas was absent), on the evening of Easter Day; (3) of five hundred brethren at once[l]—a passing word

[h] Ps. xvi. 10. [i] John xi. 39. [j] Hos. vi. 2.

[k] Matt. xvi. 21; xvii. 23; xx. 17.

[l] Probably on the mountain in Galilee (Matt. xxviii. 16).

that proves, though Israel as a nation refused their own Messiah, large numbers were called out of Israel by our Lord's personal ministry; (4) of James, an appearance here alone revealed, but a most gracious preparation for his presidency of the apostolic college; (5) then of all the Apostles—that is, including Thomas; and (6), writes St. Paul, He was seen of me, "the untimely born one" of the Apostles. What accumulated proof is here! What fact in the past history of the world rests on firmer or ampler evidence? This statement was published in the lifetime of most of these eye-witnesses—witnesses, moreover, many of whom had given up all that man holds dear in attestation of their belief in this fact.

Ere he pursues his argument, the Apostle lingers for a little space on his own labours and those of his fellow-evangelists. He speaks in the deepest humility and self-abasement, and yet in burning gratitude for that which God had wrought in him and in them. All was of grace. As for himself, for long years he had persecuted the Church of God. But God revealed His Son to him and in him. If ever man gave security for the truth of his convictions, it was Paul; for he freely surrendered all that the world covets and grasps

—rank, riches, power, fame; and cheerfully endured all the worst which man could heap upon him—persecution and peril in countless forms. This was no thing of yesterday. Twenty-four years had passed since his conversion when thus he wrote to Corinth. He was as ardent as ever. And yet that he was no fanatic or dreaming enthusiast his whole life proves. Witness his patient work; his wise practical common sense; his inspired legislation, which has governed the Church for eighteen centuries. Nay, the vision near Damascus was a fact, and, coming as the crowning testimony, is an incontrovertible proof of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It was on this rock St. Paul ever rested.[m]

But now, ere he enters on the glorious issues which flow from the resurrection of Christ, St. Paul is moved by the Holy Spirit to portray the dark and gloomy obverse to this truth. What would its denial involve? What would it be if there were no resurrection?

There were those at Corinth who denied the resurrection of the body. They had received the Gospel in part, and were professed believers in Christ; but

[m] *See* Acts xxii. 14; 1 Cor. ix. 1.

they probably affirmed, as Marcion afterwards did, that the human spirit alone would survive the shock of death, and that the resurrection of the body was a carnal, materialistic, sensuous theory, unworthy of the lofty nature of man.

Now, the Apostle first declares that the doctrine of Christ's resurrection and of ours must stand or fall together. These objectors urge, There will be, there can be, no resurrection of the body: it is incredible. But the Apostle replies, There has been one positive proven resurrection: Christ has risen. The self-same body in which He died has been raised from the dead. It has been seen and handled and grasped. He has spoken in an audible voice, and mortal ears have heard Him. He has eaten in the midst of His disciples. We know it. We affirm it as a certain indisputable fact, One dead body has actually been raised. And if one, what hinders that He who raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in us?[n] Christ, who died, lives. Why should not those, who die in Him, live again?

If, indeed, you could establish the utter impossibility of such an event, if you could prove that it is

[n] Rom. viii. 11.

beyond not only the power of man, but beyond the power of God, then, of course, however sadly and mournfully, we must surrender the fact that Christ was raised. But at least consider what would be the disastrous consequences of such a theory. It would make shipwreck of your faith, and shroud eternity in unbroken gloom.

In the first place, *If Christ be not risen*, says the Apostle, *our preaching is vain and your faith is also vain.* As if he would say, You know how we have toiled to point dying sinners to a living Lord. And the burden of our Gospel has been, Christ died for our sins, and rose again for our justification. But if Christ be not raised, our labour is nought, and your confidence is nought. The fact which we proclaimed is a baseless dream of the night, and your credence is an idle profitless enthusiasm.

Nay more, if Christ be not risen, *we are found false witnesses of God.* There is no middle stand-point. We could not be innocent theorists. We have ever called God to witness that we spoke nothing but words of truth and soberness. They were no speculations which we advanced: they were simple matters of historic fact. But if those things which we announced

as facts are untrue, we, the ambassadors of the Most High, His accredited messengers, sent forth with divers gifts of the Holy Ghost, and working miracles in proof of our embassy, we, the Apostles, are liars and perjurers.

Nay more, if Christ be not risen, *ye are yet in your sins.* For what was the faith you embraced? Was it not that Christ, as your surety, undertook the load of a world's iniquity, that He the Lamb of God was slain as a propitiation and sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, and that then according to His sure promise, He rose the third day, demonstrating that the ransom was paid, and the atonement complete? But if He rose not, alas, alas, the expiation could not have sufficed. The Surety is still in the prison-house of the grave. Nay, His word is falsified. The Gospel is a delusion. Your sins are yet bound upon your soul. Woe worth the day! ye are undone. Be it that was a noble effort in the would-be Redeemer of mankind, alas! Hell is stronger than Heaven, Death than Life, the devil than God.

Then, furthermore, *they who have fallen asleep in Christ are perished,* not ceasing to exist, but perishing in their sins. O what were this? Calmly they fronted

the last enemy: they had grasped Jesus and the resurrection: they were not afraid. But if, when they opened their eyes in the unseen world, they found that the devil, who has the power of death, still detained their Surety as his hostage and prey, what then? Why, the debt could not have been paid, the ransom price must have fallen short, and what must needs follow? Insufferable thought! they who fell peacefully asleep in the arms of Jesus, must in the world of spirits bear the guilt and punishment of those sins from which they fondly thought they had been loosed by One who proved unequal to the stupendous task; and they must bear that guilt and punishment to all eternity, for who would undertake their deliverance when the Incarnate Son of God had failed?

Surely, if this were so, we Christians were of all men most miserable: our wretchedness were without a parallel. It is not that, as the case really stands, Godliness has not the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come.[o] But on this supposition, the present joys of the believer, which are indissolubly intertwined with his trust in a risen Saviour, are groundless, and his hopes are destined to

[o] 1 Tim. iv. 8.

utter, bitter, eternal disappointment. If a shipwrecked mariner, who has clung to a friendly rope, finds it suddenly give way, when by its aid he was struggling through the surge ; and if thus, when he thought himself safe of touching the shore, he is beaten back by some overmastering wave and drowned within a few yards of rescue, surely he is more to be pitied than those who never left the sinking vessel. So we are being saved by hope, a hope full of immortality ; but if our hope were after all to make us ashamed, spiritual sensibilities, which have been quickened to the very utmost, would be crushed, and anticipations which are worthy of the children of God would be quenched, fatally, finally, and for ever. Our past would be a dreary desolation, and our future a starless eternity.

But it needs only to set forth the dread consequences of such an hypothesis for it to be abandoned and put away ; it needs only be stated in its naked deformity for its utter impossibility to appear. *Now is Christ risen from the dead, the first-fruits*[p] *of them that slept*, that is to say, taking up the expression which he had used just before, of those which are fallen asleep in Christ, and shall awake to a joyful immortality.

[p] Omit ἐγένετο, "became," with best MSS. including the Sinaitic.

(2) THE HARVEST OF SAINTS.

FOR since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits: afterward they that are Christ's at His coming: then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For He hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith, all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

BY man came death: in Adam all die. In the day that Adam fell, death pervaded his physical and moral being, and this death-stricken constitution descends from generation to generation. For four thousand years death had reigned, from Adam to Moses, and from Moses

to John Baptist. The veil had been spread over all nations; all the beauty and glory of man, man the crown and climax of the creation of God, seemed to end in vanity. Death appeared to quench the spark of life. It is true, there were some few startling exceptions. Enoch was translated, Elijah was borne in a chariot of fire to heaven, and both Elijah and Elisha restored the recently dead to life: the flame just extinguished was relit. But what were these among so many? The flash of lightning made the darkness more palpable. Two only, by a marvellous interposition of God's hand, escaped the common lot of men; while over those, who had died and were raised to life, Death very soon reassumed his sway. Faith, indeed, heard strange and blessed music from the harp of prophecy; but this was future and unseen, and so far as the past and the visible bore witness, Death seemed an enemy able to contend with God. Man was like a thing of nought in his grasp. No angel, however ardent his love for the objects of his ministry, had descended into this terrible arena; and heaven had hitherto forborne to interpose betwixt man and the dire consequences of his fall.

But now, at last, when the fulness of the time was

come, One, who claimed to be the long-promised Deliverer, appeared. He came, indeed, in profoundest humiliation. He was a root out of a dry ground. When men saw Him there was no beauty that they should desire Him. Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, nursed in perils, trained in obscurity, He was despised, and men esteemed Him not. At length He came forth from the seclusion of Nazareth, doing works of superhuman beneficence and love. The blind saw, the deaf heard, the lepers were cleansed, the lame leaped for joy, the storm was hushed, the devils quailed at His word ; and more than all, the dead were raised. Yet there had been preludes of all these things in the miracles of the Old Testament. Was Jesus of Nazareth only a mightier Moses or Elijah? Nay, there were two mysterious claims, which, if verified by fact, placed Him at once infinitely above all other prophets or deliverers, and declared the Son of Man to be the Son of God. First He affirmed that He would lay down His life as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world ; and then that He by dying should conquer death, and rise again the third day triumphant from the tomb. If, without bearing the load of a world's transgressions, Christ had offered to

enter the gloomy portals of the grave and there to do battle with Death and come forth victorious Himself alone, it would have seemed an enterprize worthy of the Incarnate Son of God. But it was far more. He died the Surety and victim for the sins of mankind. The awful shadow of a world's guilt eclipsed the light of His Father's countenance. He died, "all that of Him could die," a sacrifice for us. O those fateful three days, big with the destinies of innumerable souls! Must there have been breathless suspense in the trembling camp of Israel when the stripling David went down into the valley to fight the chosen champion of the Philistines? How much the rather when the Captain of our salvation went down in mortal weakness to the gates of death? He affirmed that He should come forth victorious. All hung on this. Easter morning broke, and the Truth vindicated His name. Christ, the Man Christ Jesus, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, One who was subject to all the sinless weakness and weariness of humanity, as truly Man as we are men, having gone down into that gloomy abyss which had been the sepulchre of life for four thousand years, has grappled with Death, has disarmed him of his dreadful sting, and has trampled

Satan under foot. Even if this fact stood alone, what heart does not echo, Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously? with His own right hand and with His holy arm hath He gotten Himself the victory. Hallelujah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.

But this fact does not stand alone. It is the central link in the golden chain of mercy, which binds a sinking universe to the Throne of God. Christ is risen, the first-fruits of them that slept: by man is the resurrection of the dead: in Christ shall all be made alive.

The allusion in the word "first-fruits" is to the Jewish ordinance, of which we read, "When ye be come into the land which I give unto you and shall reap the harvest thereof, then shall ye bring a sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest unto the priest; and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it."[q] This Sabbath was the Passover Sabbath, as appears from the fifty days, which were numbered from that time.[r] No one was allowed to begin or partake of their harvest until the wave-sheaf had been

[q] Lev. xxiii. 10, 11. [r] *See* Lev. xxiii. 15, 16.

presented before the Lord. It was through that Passover Sabbath that the body of Jesus lay in the sepulchre, and on the morrow after the Sabbath, when the sheaf was waved before the Lord, He rose. And as then the harvest began, so many bodies of the saints which slept arose and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city and appeared unto many.[s] And as fifty days later the Feast of Weeks was kept, so the risen and ascended Saviour sent the Comforter when the Day of Pentecost was fully come. The type is wonderfully perfect.

As therefore the wave-sheaf was the sure and certain pledge of the coming harvest, so is Christ the First-fruits of them that sleep. Wherefore should we doubt? All that He said should happen has been fulfilled hitherto. He said that He should be betrayed, and crucified, and slain; and so it was. He said that His lifeless body should lie in the grave until the third day; and so it was. He said that then He should take His life again and rise from the tomb; and so it was. He said that He should ascend to His Father and our Father, His God and ours; and so it was. He said that if He went He would send the Com-

[s] Matt. xxvii. 52, 53.

forter; and so it was. He said that whatsoever we asked the Father in His name should be granted; and it is so. He intimated that the interval might be protracted, but He promised that He would come again and receive His waiting people to Himself. So we stand betwixt the fulfilled and the unfulfilled promises of our Lord. All His former predictions have been realized. Shall those which remain fail? Never. Let us thank God that room is yet left for faith—generous, noble-hearted faith. We wait but the mighty crisis of the Advent, and then, as we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.

In Christ shall all be made alive. The Son of God by becoming Son of Man took hold of human nature. There is, therefore, the bond of a common humanity betwixt Christ and all men—all, without exception, in virtue of which all shall be quickened from death, that is, all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth [t]—the lost indeed to receive their just and eternal condemnation, for they have refused the atonement made for the sins of the whole world; but

[t] John v. 28, 29.

the saved (and it is to them that our eye is almost exclusively directed in this glorious argument) to enjoy their inheritance of everlasting felicity. But to whom is this salvation due? To Christ alone; to His willing obedience to His Father's will; to His condescending grace; to His spotless service; to His persistent love; to His supremest patience; to His unconquerable trust; to His perfect atonement; to His triumph over death and hell—we owe all to Him. Without Him we had been lost—utterly, eternally lost. With Him, by Him, in Him we are saved for evermore.

But every man in his own order. In this magnificent triumph of life over death the strictest order is observed. Each comes in his appointed place and rank and time.

1. *Christ the first-fruits.*—Christ, as the Leader, the Prince of Life, advances first Himself alone, claiming and securing resurrection, immortality, incorruptibility, glory, for His people. Do any object that Elijah and Elisha and our Lord Himself, before His crucifixion, raised the dead to life? It might suffice to answer that, if those disembodied souls actually went to Hades, they were raised by virtue of the victory which Christ should achieve: their resurrection was not in their

own right or might, but in His. And, again, it might be said that they rose to die again; He to die no more. But it is a matter not revealed, whether those souls, though for a time separated from their bodies, were not kept by God in a state of trance, and then by His power re-united to the tabernacle they had for a little while forsaken. At least, the Scriptures are very strong which intimate, that Christ was actually and literally the first disembodied human soul who re-passed the gates of the grave.[u] Jesus is the First-begotten from the dead.

(2.) *Afterward they that are Christ's at His coming.* This emphatic name seems decisive that all who belong to Christ, whether quick or dead, the youngest babe as well as the most advanced saint in the household of faith, shall have part in the first resurrection. Some (from the vision of St. John, who says, I saw the souls of them which were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years: blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection[v]) have argued that it is only the martyrs and more distinguished

[u] *See* especially Acts xxvi. 23.

[v] Rev. xx. 4—6.

saints who will be raised before the Millennium; but the structure of the sentence in the Apocalypse proves that these martyrs were only part of the blessed company whom the Apostle saw; and other Scriptures testify that all the living who are Christ's at His advent, and all who sleep in Him, shall be raised or translated, when the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. These form the Bride; these constitute the Church of the First-born, who for ever occupy a position of high pre-eminence among the saints. As the name, *They that are Christ's*, lingers on the ear, how each heart counts its own priceless treasures; parent and child, brother and sister, husband and wife, friend and long-parted friend—but all safely stored in the heavenly garner, and awaiting the day of the manifestation of the sons of God. Then the marriage of the Lamb shall have come, and His wife have made herself ready.

(3.) *Then the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God.* As there is an interval between Christ's resurrection and that of His people, so, from other Scriptures,[w] we gather that there is an interval

[w] Cf. Isa. lxv. lxvi.; Dan. vii. xii.; Rev. xix. xx.

between His advent to take possession of His kingdom and the final judgment before the great white throne, and that during this interval the saints will live and reign with Christ a thousand years. The day of the Lord is no brief space of twenty-four hours, but, like the day of grace, a prolonged period. It will be ushered in by the sunrise of the returning Saviour and by the resurrection of the just. This will introduce a millennium of prevalent blessedness upon earth, and at the solemn close of that day will take place the universal judgment, the final condemnation of the wicked, and the everlasting destruction of Satan and death and hell. To this close of "the Lord's day" the words *then the end* refer. Then will be the winding up of this dispensation—the end for ever of sin, and sorrow, and conflict—the no more death, nor pain, nor curse, foretold by St. John[x]—the passing away of things temporal, the establishment of things eternal, the triumphant victory of good over evil. Then the Son will deliver up the kingdom to the Father. Not that He will cease to reign, either as King or Priest, in the ages to come, any more than the eternal Father ceases to reign now, for Of His kingdom there shall be no

[x] Rev. xxi. 4; xxii. 3.

end.[y] And again, Unto the Son, He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.[z] And again, The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent; Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.[a] But that when His true Godhead has been as conspicuously displayed, as before it was wondrously veiled, then the Son will delight to manifest His filial subordination to the Father.

Just as a mighty monarch's warrior son, who has subdued a rebellious province and punished the incorrigible, and reduced the rest to loyal subjection, lays aside his military insignia, and is known henceforth, not as the general of the army, but as the beloved son of his father and the equally beloved prince of his people, so Christ, having put down every hostile power, will reign in the hearts of the subjects of His blessed kingdom for ever. Yea, *He must reign.* Such is the purpose of omnipotent love, such the irreversible word of Jehovah, until He hath put all enemies under His feet. Thrice blessed assurance! There are hours when other promises of the Gospel may bring us sweet peace; but, when face to face with the temporary triumph of the enemy at the burial of the dead, none

[y] Luke i. 33. [z] Heb. i. 8. [a] Ps. cx. 4.

are more full than this of strong and abiding consolation. He must reign; all enemies shall be subdued before Him; and of them all death shall be destroyed last; for while any active powers of evil remain unsubdued, death, the inevitable consequence of sin, must remain undestroyed.

For He hath put all things under His feet. The Apostle here quotes that Psalm,[b] which has been well called "the lyric echo" of the first chapter of Genesis. It was probably written by David, when as a shepherd he kept his father's flock on the grassy slopes of Bethlehem. The shades of evening seem to have fallen, the brief twilight to have passed; and now the burning stars, burning as they only can in an eastern sky, are seen as golden lamps in the heavens. The moon arises, "and o'er the dark her silver mantle throws;" and, as he gazes, the musing minstrel, under the breathing of the spirit of God, breaks forth in adoration, O LORD our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth! The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord; but around and beyond the earth are those infinite heavens, and God is throned in glory above them all. Even babes and sucklings must lisp

[b] Ps. viii. 6.

His praise, and their feeble notes shall abash the enemy and avenger. But as the Psalmist continues to meditate, the apparent insignificance of man beneath the grandeur of the star-spangled firmament overwhelms him. Then the creative fiat of the Almighty, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness, and let them have dominion over all the earth,[c] seems to recur to his mind. Man, though made a little lower than the angels, is the true king and priest of this earthly temple, which God hath builded for His glory. The enemy may have prevailed for a little season, but God has crowned man with glory and honour. Who shall dethrone him? God made him to have dominion over the works of His hands; who shall disannul the counsels of the Most High? Hath He said, and shall He not do it? Anarchy may have broken loose, but the King of kings will not break His covenant nor alter the thing which has gone out of His lips. Man —notwithstanding his present humiliation and weakness—man shall reign; for God has put all things under his feet. Therefore, away with gloomy forebodings and unbelieving fears! and up again with the song of adoring Hallelujah, O LORD our Lord, how

[c] Gen. i. 26.

excellent is Thy name in all the earth! Thus this Psalm is like a glorious rainbow-arch: one foot of it is planted in Eden, amid the purity of the primeval creation; it spans the conflicts of six thousand years, during which the enemy and avenger has been striving to thwart the counsels of all-perfect love; and the other foot rests in the ages to come, when the Son of Man, God incarnate, shall have put all enemies under His triumphant feet.

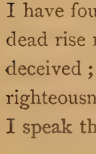
Then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all. When the whole creation is thus subjected to the Son, who is the Creator and Heir of all things, then shall the Eternal Son also Himself be manifestly subordinate, by His own willing and holy presentation of Himself and the ransomed universe, to the Eternal Father. And so God will be all in all, not the Father without the Son, nor the Father and the Son without the Co-eternal Spirit; but Father Son and Spirit in the Unity of the Godhead, being worshipped and adored by things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth.

Of this profound mystery, when in the future glory the clouds of sin and sorrow shall be for ever swept

away, perhaps the experience of saints in their access to and communion with God on earth may afford some faint adumbration. When in prayer they are most conscious of the struggle with unbelief and sin, how vividly they realize the mediatorship of the Man Christ Jesus: they seem to come first to Jesus, and through Him they have access by One Spirit unto the Father. But when God in Christ lifts up the light of His countenance in clearest effulgence upon them, as they kneel at the footstool of the throne of grace, then it is often rather the Unity of Essence in the Godhead than the Trinity of Persons which fills and absorbs their souls. They are in the Presence of Him who is Love: they dwell in God and God in them. And at such an hour God to them is all in all.

(3) BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD.

ELSE what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead? and why stand we in jeopardy every hour? I protest by your rejoicing, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. Be not deceived; evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.



HE Apostle is now moved by the Spirit to recall his thoughts from the glorious and illimitable prospects of which he had spoken, and to pursue and strengthen his argument for the resurrection of the dead. He again reverts to the unbelieving mistrust of some at Corinth, who denied this article of the faith, and replies to them by a proof which, from the very way in which he introduces it, *Else what shall they do which are baptized*

for the dead? must evidently have come home at once to them, but which, probably from our ignorance of an expression then current in the Church, but now obsolete, has given rise to much controversy.

Some have supposed that St. Paul alluded to a custom which has been discovered to exist among some obscure Gnostics in the third century, and which, it is conjectured, may have existed among them two centuries before, namely, vicarious baptism of the living for the dead;—if any convert died unbaptized, another living believer receiving baptism in his stead. But the Apostle would never have drawn any argument from so erroneous a practice, which moreover almost certainly arose long afterwards from misunderstanding these very words before us.

The true bearing of the expression seems to be this. Believers, with their children, are baptized into the name of a crucified and living Saviour. This Saviour, who was Himself dead and is alive again for evermore, is the first-fruits of the saints who shall rise again in the morning of the resurrection. The baptism of believers, therefore, is a seal and pledge of their faith in the risen Christ and in the resurrection

of the dead. They are buried with Christ in baptism.[d] To this the very form of administering baptism testifies, whether by immersion, as more frequently in the East, or by sprinkling, as more frequently in the West: the form is immaterial, whether the candidate is dipped in the water as an emblem of burial; or whether water is poured or sprinkled upon them, which is an emblem of burial also, as we scatter a little mould on the coffin, saying, Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in token of death. But, as believers are buried with Christ in baptism into death, so they then and there, by the same act, declare their faith, that, like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, they and all who sleep in Him shall rise again. Every baptized believer identifies his cause with Christ and the blessed dead who are with Him in paradise. He pleads, as it were, on behalf of the dead; while unbelievers in this article of the creed may well be said to speak against the dead, disparaging their condition, and discrediting their expectations. The believer casts in his lot with those who sleep in Christ: he affirms that their faith is his faith, their hopes are his hopes, and their resurrection

[d] Rom. vi. 4; Col. ii. 12.

that which he himself humbly and confidingly anticipates. He is in this sense baptized for the dead.

But this is not all. It is not only an act in the past. New converts and the children of believers are being continually baptized. The army of Christ, which is evermore recruiting its ranks here, is on the march from the wilderness of this world through the river of death into the promised land of everlasting life. It is one indissoluble army, even as the hosts of Israel were one people of the living God, when part had crossed over Jordan, and part were in the bed of the river, and part had not yet come to the margin. The foremost warriors are indeed continually passing from the Church militant to the Church triumphant; but the Church on earth is not therefore of necessity the less in number, for fresh candidates are pressing in. One generation of believers passes away, but another comes. In the archives of the Church of Christ, as there is a death roll, so there is a baptismal roll, and the vacancies which death makes are ever and anon filled up. How nobly has this often been verified in the days of persecution, or in the perilous missionary field. When saints and martyrs have

fallen at the post of duty, there has been no wavering of the front rank: there have been no breaks left. Others have pressed forward from behind to take their place,—

> Each standing where his comrade stood
> The moment that he fell.

And these have declared in the most emphatic language, the language of act and deed, their faith in the resurrection of those who sleep in Christ. For if the dead rise not, their faith is a delusion and their baptism a vanity.

Again, if there be no resurrection, *Why*, urges the Apostle, *stand we in jeopardy every hour?* What his *ordinary* perils as an ambassador of the cross were we know from his own lips, and what his support.[e] This letter to Corinth, moreover, was written from Ephesus: the tumult in the theatre there is vividly described by St. Luke;[f] but this, it seems, was only the prelude to far greater dangers, hinted at but not recorded,[g] which befell him there. Now, all these perils were matters of joy to St. Paul if Christ were risen, and if

[e] 2 Cor. xi. 23—27; 2 Cor. iv. 7 to v. 1.

[f] Acts xix. 23—41.

[g] 2 Cor. i. 8—10.

the dead should rise; but if the dead rise not, and therefore Christ is not raised, and we are yet in our sins, wherefore, he asks, do we endure these things? Why, like a captive in an amphitheatre, have I contended with human foes, savage as wild beasts, here at Ephesus? What is my reward? *Cui bono?* What advantage shall I reap from all my sufferings? This life, on such a supposition, were all. My futurity is a hopeless blank. And what, in this case, were better than the maxim of the worldling and the sensualist, who, when God called to weeping and to mourning, answered, Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.[h]

Be not deceived. Such, even a living for time and the things of time, would be the inevitable issue of denying the resurrection of the dead. And, furthermore, a subtle unbelief would whisper, "This mortal body of yours, which is so soon destined to be forsaken for ever, cannot affect the immortal soul: it is only an encumbrance: you may treat it as you will: you may sin in the body; for the soul only will survive the shock of death." This insidious reasoning would have double force in sensual Corinth. The

[h] Isa. xxii. 12, 13.

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danger of self-deception was urgent and imminent.

Now, to refute this inference, the Apostle quotes an Iambic verse from Menander's Thais, *Evil communications corrupt good manners.*[i] Even their own poets would rebuke them. We glean a lesson in passing, to employ in Christ's service whatever is true and pure and honest in human literature. They whom Paul had espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ,[j] were in danger of being corrupted from the simplicity of the Gospel. And then they would sleep away, dream away, aye, as under the influence of intoxicating wine, drink away their immortality. Let them awake in right earnest, awake as from the sleep of wine, so as to come to a true realization of things as they are, and to act as an enlightened conscience dictated. Let them not yield to sin and Satan: scepticism soon leads to immorality. The Apostle does not overcharge them all; but ignorance of God was the secret lurking reason of some among them being open to these temptations. And this was cause for deepest shame and humiliation.

How broad is the contrast here drawn between

[i] φθείρουσιν ἤθη χρῆσθ' ὁμιλίαι κακαί. [j] 2 Cor. xi. 2.

living for time and living for eternity, between walking by faith and walking by sight, between setting the heart on things seen and temporal and setting the heart on things unseen and everlasting. The same contrast is true now as then. Alas! there are those who are living for time. It is here expressed very strongly (the Bible does write things in large characters, so large that he who runs may read), *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.* But though the language may be softened and the thought concealed, is not this still the maxim of the world? They have no bright hope beyond the grave. They may cherish a dim, shadowy, wavering desire to make their peace with God some day, and to go to heaven at last. But practically to-day is their all. To make provision for the wants of time, to share in social recreations, to cultivate and enjoy domestic endearments—things which, if used for God, are the best school for heaven, but which, apart from Him, submerge the soul in the cares of this life—these things engross their heart's affections. Not that for the most part they live without a form of piety: religiousness is part of their moral nature; and this they must appease, or conscience would gnaw. But there is no heart in their religion.

They do not draw near to God, speak to God, trust in God, love God, live to God. Earth is their rest. And they reflect with intensest regret, We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. They mourn the lapse of years. For what have they beyond?

Now in broadest contrast with this there are those, thank God, who are living for eternity. Christ is their life. Their hope centres in a crucified and risen Saviour. They have washed their souls in His blood. They have stood by faith beside His cross and open sepulchre. They are crucified to the world and the world to them. They confess that they are strangers and pilgrims here, who are journeying to the Celestial City. They take up their daily cross. Their treasure is in heaven (and their thoughts travel thither before them): the welcome home, the presence of Jesus, the Father's smile, the crystal river of the Spirit's grace, the society of the redeemed, the companionship of angels, the many mansions, the perfect service, and the perfect rest, and the perfect adoration. And, travellers themselves, they long to persuade others to join them on their homeward journey. They are watching for the morning; their loins girt, their lights

burning, and they themselves like men who wait for the Bridegroom, that when He cometh and knocketh they may open to Him immediately.

May every heart be led deeply to ponder, Am I living for time or for eternity?

(4) THE WITNESS OF CREATION.

BUT some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body, as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed His own body.

All flesh is not the same flesh; but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.

There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory.

BUT some man will say, How are the dead raised up? The Apostle now comes to discuss and defend the possibility, nay, the necessity, of a glorified and spiritual body. He has advanced far in his argument, and made good the ground already traversed. He has proved beyond controversy that Christ, the same Christ

who was buried, was raised from the dead. Deny this, and you must forego all belief in testimony, and renounce all hopes of a blessed immortality. But you cannot deny it: Christ is risen. Now He did not die, nor was He raised, as a solitary Man. He died for the sins of the world, the Surety and Substitute for man. And so He rose, the first-fruits of those who sleep in Him. And this is our earnest, that He will not fail nor be discouraged till His foes are made His footstool, and God is all in all. Of this glorious hope the very constitution of the Church militant here on earth, with its baptismal roll of those who embrace the faith, and its death roll of those who have kept the faith and enter into rest, is pledge and proof; for believers and their children are willingly baptized for the dead, affirming by act and deed that the faith of the holy dead is their faith, that they have cast in their lot with those who sleep in Christ, and that they look with them for the inheritance of the everlasting kingdom.

But admitting all this, there still remains the stupendous difficulty of this poor human body, so feeble and frail and corruptible, being raised again, and so raised that it can discharge the functions of

celestial life. *How*, asks the dubious and hesitating objector, *how are the dead raised up, and with what body, a body of what kind and nature,*[k] *do they come?* First, how can that mouldering frame be raised again? Does it not commingle with the dust? Are not its particles scattered to the winds, and even incorporated with other living creatures? How can it be rebuilt? And then, what kind of body shall the risen saints inhabit? If the same as that in which we tabernacle here, how can it be suited for the spiritual life of eternity? If not the same, how can it be called a resurrection of that which is buried in the grave?

St. Paul answers both perplexities by one analogy. The seed-corn is not quickened to life, except it die; it is sown as naked grain; it is raised, clothed in new and beautiful apparel.[l] What is this but a prophecy and proof from the natural creation that the resurrection is possible, and that the resurrection body is in one respect diverse from, in another respect identical with, that which is buried in the tomb? The objection is this: the body dies, it decays, it turns to dust; surely it utterly perishes. The answer is, so does the seed-corn die, and yet it does not utterly perish. Yea,

[k] ποίῳ

[l] Vv. 36—38.

more, it dies that it may live. As naked grain, it is hard and dry and fruitless; it must needs die before it can obtain its higher and nobler life as a graceful, fruitful, reproductive plant. Whatever difficulty attaches to the rising again of the body, attaches to the rising again of the seed-corn. The seed-corn, as a matter of constant experience, does rise again; so shall the body rise. But furthermore, the seed-corn does not appear again above the soil as it was sown, *bare grain.* Far otherwise: once buried in the dark earth and covered with the clods of the field, it dies, and its fashion perishes; but its incorruptible germ springs up, first the blade, then ear, then the full corn in the ear, with all its wondrous organization for drawing nutriment from the soil into which its roots have struck, and from the air in which it breathes and lives. You saw not all this, yea, this development was not, when it was bare grain, and in this respect the body of the *risen* seed-corn is diverse from that which you sowed.

But a new perplexity here suggests itself. If, according to this analogy, the body of the risen saint is diverse from that which is buried, how can we call it a resurrection and not rather a creation *de novo?* How

will saint recognize saint hereafter, or each one realize for himself that his body then is the very same in which he tabernacled on earth? To answer this, take again the grains of wheat, barley, rye, and oats,—seed from seed not more dissimilar in their form than saint from saint: yet when they have been sown and quickened, and have sprung up into newness of life, do you confuse one with another, or think for a moment that the stalk of barley sprang from the seed-corn of wheat, or the oats from the rye? Nay, there is no loss of identity; there is no confusion of different grains. The new body in which the seed clothes itself, though different in appearance and power, is identical in essence with that from which it sprang, for it sprang from a central germ of life. This is the work of the Omnipotent Creator: God giveth it a body, as it hath pleased Him. No human skill or wit could contrive so marvellous a thing as a seed-corn, which, when buried, should rise again and put on such new and beautiful apparel, and yet in its higher life be so easily identified with the naked grain from which it came. Collect together all the men of science in the world, and they could not make so marvellous a structure as a simple grain of corn, which rises through

death to life. This is the finger of God; and the same Almighty God will give to every saint such a glorified body as He pleases, and yet in every case that body of our glory shall as truly spring from this body of our humiliation, as the plant springs from the seed.

Such proof the seed-corn yields; but the argument for a resurrection body will be greatly extended and strengthened, if we consider the endless varieties which obtain in the universe of God.[m] Animal bodies on earth differ from one another as to their respective kinds of flesh; heavenly bodies differ from earthly; heavenly bodies differ among themselves.

If human beings, with flesh animated by soul and soul animated by spirit, had been the only creatures that moved, how hard would it have been to conceive of any other terrestrial animals. It would have been far more difficult to imagine animated flesh subsisting in the denser element of water; and if we had never seen a bird winging its way in the sky, the conception of animated flesh, so organized that it could overcome the force of gravity, might well have appeared impossible. If we had never known of other animals, we

[m] Vv. 39—41.

might have argued that it needs the Divine Spirit, that breath of the Almighty which is in man, to render life in flesh possible; or if we had only known terrestrial animals, we might have averred that life must needs be quenched by water, nor could flesh rise and sustain itself above its mother earth. There is however the flesh of beasts, of fishes, and of birds, suited respectively for the earth, the water, and the air. Why shall we not believe that a glorified flesh is possible, which is suited for the mansions of glory?

Furthermore, there are celestial bodies as well as terrestrial within our view. If the firmanent had been a blank, if no star or planet had ever studded the sky, unbelief might with more show of reason have urged, nothing but earth has been fashioned by God, and therefore nothing but the organization of an earthly body is conceivable; but those heavenly orbs, so different from our own, may well suggest different forms of life.

And lastly, those heavenly bodies are diverse one from another. There are the different glories of the sun and moon and stars: yea, star differeth from star in form and radiance. So that, as far as we can judge

by the eye, one sphere may differ from another as much as all from earth. This much is certain: variety —ceaseless, endless variety—obtains throughout the creation of God; and who, with this fact before him, shall affirm that there cannot be a spiritual body fitted for a heavenly life? Shall experience teach us so much from the seen, and shall not faith dare to take one step onward into the unseen? not dare, when God has spoken plainly,—nay more, when He has given pledge and proof in the death and resurrection of His dear Son?

(5) THE IMAGE OF THE HEAVENLY.

SO also is the resurrection of the dead : It is sown in corruption ; it is raised in incorruption : it is sown in dishonour ; it is raised in glory : it is sown in weakness ; it is raised in power : it is sown a natural body ; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body ; and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul ; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit, that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural ; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy : the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they that are earthy : and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

AVING thus prepared the way, St. Paul now speaks positively and authoritatively. There would have been much of peace and strength and hope if his argument had ended here. All nature is vocal ; every plant is a parable ; every animal is an emblem ; every star is a sign ; and a voice is heard from the mighty harp of

creation, "The dead shall rise again." But no uncertainty must be allowed to hang over so momentous a truth; nothing must be left to inference. And now the Spirit speaketh expressly, *So also is the resurrection of the dead; it is sown*—that is, it is buried; the word *sown* is taken from the previous argument of the seed-corn, and is itself a prophecy: —*it is sown in corruption, in dishonour, in weakness,* or rather, "strengthlessness."[n] When once the silver cord is loosed and the golden bowl is broken, then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.[o] But it is not of the disembodied spirit St. Paul is speaking now —of that he tells elsewhere, when he says, To depart and be with Christ is far better:[p]—but of the deserted tabernacle; and what words he uses, *corruption, dishonour, powerlessness.* Dissolution has set in. Nor can the strongest faith and the tenderest affection do away the dishonour of death. The beloved Sarah died, and Abraham prayed, Give me a burying-place, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.[q] Job seems to shudder at the thought, over

[n] ἀσθενείᾳ—not a little strength, but none.

[o] Eccl. xii. 6, 7. [p] Phil. i. 23. [q] Gen. xxiii. 4.

which his trust in the Redeemer enabled him to triumph, Though after my skin worms destroy this body.[r] Martha would fain have not had the stone taken away from the sepulchre of her fondly-cherished brother; nor has the lifeless tenement any power to reanimate itself, or perform the least function for God or man; it is being taken down, and can offer no resistance. What humiliation is here! Truly, pride was not made for those who dwell in houses of clay, and are crushed before the moth. We may be conversant with scenes of death: our sensibilities may have become numbed. But the stupendous fact remains. Part of that complex being, man, of which God said, Let Us make man in Our image, turns to decay. That which God designed for His glory is dissolved. Here is dishonour indeed. The breathless tabernacle cannot praise God, nor can the grave celebrate Him; the silence is unbroken; the sepulchre is dumb.

Nor is this an abstract truth—a far-off theory. It comes home to each man. Death is before every one of us, and perhaps ere long. We must die (unless, indeed, the Prince of Life return first); we must draw

[r] Job xix. 26.

the last labouring breath ; this throbbing heart must cease to beat ; this busy brain be still ; these facile lips be rigid ; and these toiling hands be laid powerless by our side. The Apostle confesses all. The seed-corn falls into the ground and dies. So is it with the body. Let the worst be told. Dust it is, and unto dust it returns. But hearken,—

It is raised. We are tempted to think we misread the words, and that they should run, It *shall be* raised. Nay, this is the triumphant present of anticipative faith. Faith overleaps the interval. Why not ? Has not the earnest been already paid ? Is not Christ raised ? Are not we one with Him ? He is raised in incorruption, glory, power. As He is, so are we in the purpose and promise of God. *It is raised in incorruption ;* no longer subject to disease and decay and death. *It is raised in glory ;* the full realization and manifestation of that original perfection for which God designed man. *It is raised in power ;* the body no longer, as now it too often is, a weary weight to depress the elastic spirit, but as wings to bear it upward into the everlasting sunlight. For we are to share the dominion of Christ and the greatness of His kingdom for ever and ever. And our resurrection

bodies will be equal to the demand. They will not break down under the strain. They will be able to bear with perfect facility the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. They will fulfil His behests with unwearying and unflagging energy. Now, our mortal tabernacles are the bodies of our abasement—so frail and so soon exhausted, and liable to accident and disease and hunger and thirst and humiliation at every time. Take one fact. We cannot rise above the earth on which we tread. Why, I never look upon a lark rising heavenward, or a sea-gull smoothly sailing through the upper air, without being conscious of a silent witness to a nobler destiny which must needs await man—the crown of the creation of God. Take another fact. How soon frighted we are! How little of the unseen we can bear! When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit;—and so when He came to them after His resurrection, we read, They were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.[8] Well; and what if they had seen a spirit? Are not angels spirits, and are they not around us on every side? The truth must be confessed—we are liable to fear, and fear

[8] Matt. xiv. 26; Luke xxiv. 37.

hath torment. But all this is only for a short season. The body is raised in incorruption, glory, power ;—the whole being so framed, that the very perfection of every organ will excite desire to employ it where employment is delight. Just as when one who can play skilfully on a harp sees before him an instrument of exquisite workmanship, it awakens the dormant harmonies within him, and the impulse is almost irresistible to touch those responsive chords. So, I apprehend, it will be in glory. There will be no need to spur thought, no laggard faculties, no failure, no jar, the spiritual body being as completely subject to the pure impulses of the regenerate spirit as the hand of a skilful musician is subject to the quick melodies and harmonies which fill his soul. The body will be the perfect organ of a perfect spirit, for it will be fashioned like unto the glorified body of our Lord.

Of this the Apostle immediately proceeds to speak. But ere we pursue his argument let the reader bear with me while I remind him (for this little book may fall into the hands of those who have no hope beyond the grave) that there is a solemn and dark obverse to this truth. Some of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake to shame and everlasting con-

tempt.[t] All that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation.[u] What is this? To be clothed upon with a body that can endure the wrath to come. Alas, alas, there are vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.[v] May God of His boundless mercy grant that those, who are travelling unconcerned and unprepared to the tribunal of God, may have pity on themselves, while the day of grace lasts, and flee for refuge to the Cross of Christ! There is infinite virtue in His blood to wash away all their sins. There is infinite power in His spirit to renew and recreate their will. There is infinite love in the Father's heart for them. There is room in the mansions of glory for them. How often has God brought life out of death? And it may be that the death of one dear as their own soul may be eternal life to them.

Nor are the lessons far to seek for those, who are humbly looking forward to the resurrection of incorruption and glory and power. This blessed hope, whenever realized, must surely kindle anew their

[t] Dan. xii. 2. [u] John v. 28, 29. [v] Rom. ix. 22.

adoring love to Him who has redeemed their body and the bodies of all they love from the hand of the enemy. They confide in Him not only as the Saviour of the soul, but as the Saviour of the body too. And they repeat with a livelier faith that blessed article of our Creed, I believe in the resurrection of the body. Furthermore, what jealous care ought to be theirs not to abuse this body, which He has redeemed at such a cost, in the service of sin, the world, or the devil. Shall they pamper it, or defile it with the lusts of the flesh, or employ its members in the deeds of darkness, or even dress and adorn it with ostentatious array, or even so constantly wear it out in the legitimate business of life that it is not fit for the highest functions of service, that prayer is a burden, and the intelligent study of God's word an impossibility? Nay, shall they not present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God through Jesus Christ? Soon, very soon, if they are His, shall every power be absorbed in His blessed ministry in heaven. Shall not they so live, that they may be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light?

But to return. The Apostle had confessed all the

humiliation of death, and affirmed all the triumph of that victory over death which we achieve in the risen Christ. And now he adds, as a climax to the contrast between what is and what shall be, *It is sown a natural* (ψυχικόν) *body: it is raised a spiritual* (πνευματικόν) *body.* The full view of the complex being of man is given in his prayer for the Thessalonians—I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless.[w] In this threefold division the soul, or natural life—that which is shared, though in a much lower type, by animals—touches the body on the one side and the spirit on the other, animating the body and being itself animated by the spirit. And, therefore, when St. Paul had before contrasted the unregenerate with the regenerate man, he had said, A natural man (ψυχικὸς ἄνθρωπος) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned; but he that is spiritual (ὁ πνευματικός) judgeth all things.[x] The man whose aims and objects are limited to this life, and whose spirit has not been quickened by the Holy Ghost, is emphatically

[w] 1 Thess. v. 23; πνεῦμα, ψυχή, σῶμα.

[x] 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15.

and distinctively a natural man. On the other hand he, whose spirit has been informed and illuminated by the Spirit of God, is distinctively a spiritual man. Now, the same characteristic, which there marks the whole man, is here applied to the body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. Our present body, while capable of being employed in the highest functions of the human spirit, is eminently suited for all the requisitions of that natural life which man shares with the whole natural creation. It is sensible of cold and heat, of hunger and thirst, of pain and pleasure, of privation and satisfaction. But our future resurrection body, while springing from this our mortal frame as truly as the plant from the corn, shall be pre-eminently suited for all the operations of the glorified spirit. Here the soul is too often earth-bound and carnal: there the body itself shall be heavenly and spiritual.

There is (ἔστι) *a natural body, and there is* (ἔστι) *a spiritual body.* The stress lies on the word "is," thus markedly repeated. Both are facts. To make a body, which is compounded of the dust and allied to the animal creation, a dwelling-place for a spirit made after God's likeness—and this body one which, if man

sinned, should turn again to its original dust—how impossible the problem might have seemed! that union of the low and the lofty, of the humbling and the elevating, of earth and heaven! But behold the fact, there *is* a natural body, so fearfully and wonderfully made. Even so there *is* a spiritual body, which shall be builded out of the elements of this body that now is; but, weakness, corruptibility, mortality, being for ever done away, so organized that it shall be responsive to every volition of the indwelling spirit. Such a spiritual body, difficult as it is for us now to realize it, yet when you patiently ponder its constitution, or rather its reconstitution—such a body, from the very absence of elements which in themselves appear incongruous and contrary, may seem to the thoughtful mind more conceivable, because more simple—more possible, because more pure. At all events, it is a fact. Behold the fact by faith. There is—not only there shall be, but in the same victorious confidence which enabled him before to say, It is raised—there *is* a spiritual body.

And so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul. To prove the original constitution of the natural body, the Apostle appeals to Scripture.

The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.[y] It is the same Hebrew word (*nephesh*) for *the living soul* in man, that had been used just before to describe *the life* in animals.[z] The difficulty in Eden was to convince man of his low origin as to his body: his danger was pride; and against this his origin, of the dust, was a constant witness. The difficulty now is to persuade man of the high destiny of his body; and for this, the quotation from Genesis being ended, the Apostle continues, *The last Adam*, a well-known name among the Jews for the Messiah, the Second Head of the human race, *was made a quickening spirit*—not only a living, but a life-giving spirit. From all eternity, as the Father hath life in Himself, so gave He to the Son also to have life in Himself.[a] But the Son of God was made, or became, a life-giving spirit to man by His incarnation, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension, high priesthood, and by His mission of the Holy Ghost.

In this mighty scheme of redemption there is a

[y] Gen. ii. 7.

[z] "Wherein there is life," or "a living soul." (Gen. i. 30.)

[a] John v. 26.

Divine order observed. As God commanded the light to shine out of darkness, as He formed the orderly cosmos out of formless chaos, as in the seed-corn He educes life out of death; so there is first the natural and the earthly,[b] to keep man humble for ever—even in the boundless ages to come he must and will remember that he was once a frail, feeble, mortal creature, whose days on the earth were as a shadow—and then the spiritual and the heavenly;[c] for man, now so lowly and abased, shall be exalted to everlasting life, shall be equal to the angels; yea, as the Bride of Christ, shall share His throne of glory. Of this future and lasting triumph the sure pledge is this, *The Second Man is the Lord from heaven.* He, Jehovah, who inhabits eternity, became an infant of days and a man of sorrows. He, who is in the bosom of the Father, has taken hold of and joined Himself in indissoluble union to this our human nature. He was made flesh and tabernacled among us, and was thus subject to all the sinless feebleness and toils and sufferings of man. And when He ascended from Olivet, He was still bone of our bone and flesh of our

[b] χοικός, made of dust, χοῦς, see Gen. ii. 7; χοῦν ἀπὸ γῆς, LXX.
[c] ἐπουράνιος.

flesh; and there, at the right hand of God, on the rainbow-circled throne, behold a Man, the Man Christ Jesus, the reality of that which Ezekiel saw in vision[d]—a Man before whom the angels and archangels, the cherubim and seraphim, bow in the adoration of love. See to what a height of glory this body of our humiliation is capable of being raised. Wherefore, let us be of good comfort; for as it has been with the Captain of our Salvation, so likewise shall it be with us. As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

We have indeed borne the image of the earthy, and shall bear it about with us until we depart to be with Christ, which is far better. We are conscious that we are tabernacling in bodies of sin and death. They are bodies that humble us and keep us low. It is not only, or chiefly, that they are subject to hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, sickness, and pain, and decay. It is not only that they are often a clog and

[d] And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone, and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Jehovah. (Ezek. i. 26, 28.)

weight on the soaring spirit, so that when we would mount up in thought, as on eagle's wings, to heaven, the brain is weary, and the heart faints, and the aspiration sinks, like the little lark tired with its song, upon the earth. But there is cause for deeper self-abasement and more burning shame. Who does not confess it? How often has there been the envious eye, the grasping hand, the unloving lip, the offending member, which has tempted us to transgress the eternal law of love. We are conscious, not only that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, but that we ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.[e]

It is true that we who believe, even when we ask in anguish, Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? can echo from the heart the cry of wrestling victory, I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.[f] We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. We dare not, we would not for a moment, doubt the cleansing virtue of that fountain. Our High Priest sprinkles our hearts there-

[e] Rom. viii. 23, 24. [f] Rom. vii. 24, 25.

with day by day. It speaks peace. We have opened, we do open, every affection and thought to the purifying Spirit of Jesus. That Holy Comforter teaches us to pray: He sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts, and puts the child's cry into our lips, Abba, Father: He displays to us the beauty of holiness, and makes us hunger after it: and He whispers in the words which He taught the Apostle, whom Jesus loved, to write, Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.[g]

All this is true. But meanwhile the interval seems long, and the conflict is sore, and the failures are many and grievous; and we, like David, should faint, unless we believed verily to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. We do believe. It is written here, as with a sunbeam, in the oracles of God, We shall bear the image of the heavenly. He has undertaken it, and He will do it. His word is pledged, His veracity at stake: This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise.[h]

In what does this image of the heavenly consist?

[g] 1 John iii. 2. [h] Isa. xliii. 21.

Scripture answers, in bodily and spiritual likeness to Jesus Christ. We shall be like our Lord in body. Our citizen-life, writes St. Paul, is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, who shall change the body of our abasement, that it may be fashioned like unto the body of His glory, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself.[i] If therefore we would know what our glorified body will be like, we must carefully gather up all the intimations of Scripture regarding the body of our Lord after His resurrection, that body in which He sojourned on earth for the forty days, in which He ascended from Olivet, in which He has taken His seat at the right hand of the Father, in which the dying Stephen saw Him, in which He appeared to John in Patmos, and in which He will return to judge the world. His natural body, which was sown in weakness and dishonour, was raised a spiritual body in power and glory. It was visible or invisible, at will. Though a spiritual body, it was capable of receiving material food; though tangible and palpable, it was not bound to our solid globe, for therein He rose from

[i] Phil. iii. 20, 21. The three variations from the authorized version in the verses as quoted above, are the simplest and most literal transla-

Olivet till a cloud received Him out of the sight of His apostles. It is true that its full glory was veiled, was of necessity veiled, during the forty days; and in this respect the ascension was a further stage in our Lord's glorification. But Easter was the crisis: before His resurrection it was the body of His abasement, afterwards it was the body of His glory. Thenceforth death had no more dominion over Him:[j] His was the power of an indissoluble life.[k]

Now, the same omnipotence which raised and transformed the body of Christ will raise and transform ours. For if, argues St. Paul, we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection. And again, If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.[l]

tion of the Greek. The word, *πολίτευμα*, signifies the whole life of the citizen. There is deep humiliation, but not a shadow of bitterness or contempt, expressed in *τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν*. Our Lord's own body was, in the days of His flesh, the body of His abasement, before it became, at and ever after His resurrection, the body of His glory, *τὸ σῶμα τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ*.

[j] Rom. vi. 9, 10. [k] Heb. vii. 16. [l] Rom. vi. 5; viii. 11.

The earthly house of this tabernacle being dissolved, we shall have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.[m] When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory.[n] Yea, the self-same images, which are used to set forth the resplendent beauty of our Lord, are used also of His people. Does He say, I am the bright and morning star? Was His countenance as the sun shining in its strength? In that morning of the resurrection we are assured that the wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.[o] Now the saints are the Lord's hidden ones; but that shall be the day of the eternal manifestation of the sons of God.

But far more, we shall be like our Lord in spirit. This is a far nobler promise; for the body, even the glorified body, is but the house of the immortal spirit. Have we not seen on earth one with a noble countenance and majestic form holding converse with a crippled and diseased sufferer, whose mind was nevertheless superior to his own; and have we not felt that, if there were any inequality or inferiority, it lay rather

[m] 2 Cor. v. 1. [n] Col. iii. 4. [o] Dan. xii. 3.

with him that was whole than with him that was sick; for the disparity in physical power or beauty was little in comparison with breadth of thought and warmth of affection? There, in spirit as in body, we shall bear the image of the heavenly; even now it is the lofty privilege of all believers to behold with unveiled face, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord, and, as they gaze by faith, to be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord. And they have the assurance that He who has begun this good work in them will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ;[p] but then the likeness will be perfected. As to our mental and intellectual powers, whereas now we see through a glass darkly, then we shall see face to face; whereas now we know in part, then shall we know, every one according to his measure, even as we are known.[q] Then those things which we know not now shall be revealed; then those many things, which even apostles could not bear to hear, will be the common heritage of the saints. And as to our moral and spiritual being, we shall be perfectly holy and infinitely happy; for then and there Jesus will show us plainly of the Father, and present us faultless

[p] 2 Cor. iii. 18; Phil. i. 6. [q] Cor. xiii. 12.

before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.[r] We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. We know how almost imperceptibly, even here, we catch the looks, and tones, and thoughts of one we love; we know how intelligence stamps the brow, and hope kindles the eye, and love writes its impress on the whole countenance; and then will Divine love shine upon each, as each is able to sustain the beatific vision, and will be reflected, as the sun is reflected from the thousand mirrors of earth, in responsive beams of light. Then will the King greatly desire the beauty of His Bride, the Church, for it will be perfect through His comeliness, which He will put upon her.[s] And all this is the fruit of the eternal counsels of our God, who has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.[t]

Nor can we confine this "bearing the image of the heavenly" to a condition of personal perfection and of personal rest and refreshment; but we shall be joint-heirs with Christ, who is the Heir of all things; we shall share alike the joyous ministry of angels and the

[r] John xvi. 25; Jude 24.

Ps. xlv. 13; Ezek. xvi. 14.

[t] Eph. i. 4.

beneficent royalty of the Son of God; we shall know the full meaning of the communion of saints, and shall fulfil the behests of eternal love in the new heavens and the new earth, and throughout His boundless dominions, of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end. All this, yea, more than all which tongue can express or heart conceive, lies hid in the promise, We shall bear the image of the heavenly.

(6) VICTORY OVER DEATH.

NOW this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump (for the trumpet shall sound), and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality; then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

ND now the Apostle does not fear to affirm *that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. We shall be changed; for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.* This "cannot" and this "must" clench

and close his magnificent argument for the resurrection. After this, it remains only to chant the pæan of victory, the triumph of Almighty life over mighty death. The facts being as before proved, not only the resurrection shall be, but it must be; it cannot be otherwise. The negative theory is an impossibility. That flesh and blood, corruptible as now, should inherit the kingdom of God, simply cannot be; and as we, not part of us only, but our whole being, body soul and spirit, are to inherit this kingdom, this corruptible itself must put on incorruption, and this mortal, this poor dying frame, must put on immortality.

By flesh and blood the Apostle signifies corruptible human nature, not the corruption of sin, but that liability and tendency to decay which appertain to flesh and blood as such. This appears, from the use of the words "flesh and blood," elsewhere in the New Testament, for that which is natural or human, in contrast with that which is spiritual or Divine.[u] Now this expression, *flesh and blood*, must not by any means be confounded with words of like sound, but of very different import, *flesh and bones*. This is evident from

[u] *See* Matt. xvi. 17; Gal. i. 15, 17; Eph. vi. 11, 12; Heb. ii. 14.

the words of our risen Lord to His disciples, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have.[v] And with that self-same body, as they stood round Him on Olivet, He ascended into the heavens. Here, then, the distinction is sharp and incisive. Flesh and blood, writes the Apostle, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. But flesh and bones, in the person of our incarnate Lord, do inherit that kingdom. For, in the words of the Fourth Article of our Church, "Christ did truly rise again from death, and took again His body, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature; wherewith He ascended into heaven, and there sitteth, until He return to judge all men at the last day." Flesh and bones, therefore, are plainly to be distinguished from flesh and blood. And this is yet more evident from the continual use of the expression *flesh and bones* in the Old Testament, to signify human affinity and kinship, or the closest personal union. Thus Adam said of Eve, as taken from his side, This is now bone of my bones,

[v] Luke xxiv. 38, 39.

and flesh of my flesh; and Laban of Jacob, Surely, thou art my bone and my flesh; and David to the elders of Judah, Ye are my brethren: ye are my bones and my flesh.[w] And the only passage in the New Testament in which it occurs, besides the utterance of our Lord just referred to, is the memorable saying of St. Paul, We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones,[x] where the union of man and wife is affirmed to shadow forth the great mystery of the oneness subsisting between Christ and His Church.

Blood is the life-current of the natural body: The blood is the life thereof:[y] This natural body, as liable to corruption, cannot inherit incorruption. But flesh and bones, when animated by the life-giving Spirit, will be incorruptible, and will constitute the spiritual body of every glorified saint.

A physician, to whom I once named this subject, said to me that he could quite understand, from a physical point of view, such might be the effect of a new life-current circulating through the human frame; that the blood is that for which our present body

[w] Gen. ii. 23; xxix. 14; 2 Sam. xix. 12.
[x] Eph. v. 30. [y] Lev. xvii. 10—14.

seemed to be built; that everything was arranged for it, that it was truly the life of the flesh, and that, if only there were a new life-current, our human body might well be adapted for a new and higher existence.

We see not yet indeed that body that shall be, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, but we believe that these bodies of ours, so fearfully and wonderfully made, when quickened by the Spirit of Jesus, and transfigured into the likeness of Jesus, shall inherit with Him the kingdom of His everlasting glory.

Behold, continues the Apostle, *I shew you a mystery.* Behold: open the eye of faith—let not your thoughts be engrossed with things seen and temporal. Lift up your hearts. I shew you a mystery: a mystery disclosed is our heritage and possession. The secret things belong to the Lord our God, writes Moses, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.[z] To you, said Jesus to His own, it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom.[a] Some Christians mourn that so little is known of futurity, who yet very scantily and cursorily study that revelation of

[z] Deut. xxix. 29.

[a] Matt. xiii. 11.

things to come which is vouchsafed us. *We shall not all sleep.* St. Paul does not here assert that any among those then living should witness the return of Christ before their death, any more than he asserts that he and his fellow-labourers should first die when he wrote shortly after, The Lord shall raise us up.[b] The time was hidden. But he views the Church as one in all ages. There will be many saints alive when the Lord comes in the clouds of heaven. *But we shall all be changed.* Either that, which may be called the normal process of a ransomed soul's entrance into glory, through the grave and gate of death, takes place; or else, with regard to those who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, translation—they shall be transfigured without dying, like Enoch and Elijah: that which is mortal and corruptible in them passing away, that which is immortal and imperishable germinating and being glorified. This shall be accomplished *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,* for what are moments, or hours, or days to Him who inhabits eternity, who speaks and it is done, who commands and it stands fast? *at the last trumpet,* the latest trumpet of the seven, of which we read that

[b] 2 Cor. iv. 14.

when the seventh angel sounded, there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever.[c] The silver trumpets in the camp of Israel were sounded at the marshalling of their hosts, at their joyous festivals, and at the jubilee.[d] What a marshalled array shall this be when He comes forth from the opened heavens, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and on whose head are many crowns, and whom the armies in heaven follow on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean![e] What a festive assembly will this be, when the innumerable company of angels meet the Church of the First-born in the heavenly Jerusalem![f] What an eternal jubilee, when the creation itself is delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God![g]

Then *the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.* By the dead, we are to understand the dead in Christ. Perhaps there is no one so young, or so poor in the great wealth of souls, whose heart

[c] Rev. xi. 15.
[d] Num. x. 9, 10; Lev. xxv. 9.
[e] Rev. xix. 11—14.
[f] Heb. xii. 22—23.
[g] Rom. viii. 21.

does not intuitively turn to one and another among the blessed holy dead. How often have we counted up our jewels in Paradise, and said to ourselves, They are all mine, and they are all safe in the holy keeping of the Great Treasurer? Then shall they all shine forth in the diadem of the True Solomon, the Prince of Peace, in the day of the gladness of His heart, the day of His espousals.[h] What unutterable treasures of love those words, the dead, embrace! And we shall be changed:—the whole family shall then be gathered together into one—the dead in Christ rising first, and we who are alive being caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall they and we be for ever with the Lord. So it must be: for infinite love has devised it, and infinite truth foretold it, and infinite power will accomplish it. And faith can anticipate that glorious scene foretold by St. John, when there shall be heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad, and rejoice, and give honour

[h] Song iii. 11.

to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come and His wife hath made herself ready.[1]

The Apostle now invites us to take our stand amid those future realities: he would transport us for a little season to that time, then distant and future, now future but not distant, *When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality:* a most convincing proof that the Eternal I AM, to whom yesterday and to-day and for ever are alike transparent, would have us dwell in the future as well as in the present and the past. Only let that future be sanctified and glorified by the Word of God and by prayer, or we shall be building up unsubstantial hopes which the ages to come will not verify. Here, under the guidance of the inspired Apostle, we gaze, like Moses from Pisgah, on the goodly land of promise.

Then when ours is that incorruptible and immortal body, fit for all the ministries and high responsibilities of the kingdom of God, which it will discharge, not only unwearied and undistressed but with inexpressible delight; fit for communion, undazzled and unabashed with the cherubim and seraphim and the

[1] Rev. xix. 6, 7.

principalities and powers in the heavenly places; fit for indissoluble oneness with all the members of the mystical Bride of Christ, for there even the holiest and loftiest will acknowledge in the humblest and feeblest saint a necessary link in their blessed society—yea, a body fit for that supremest joy, than which heaven has nothing higher, the beatific vision of God (a test of perfection and of purity which must needs be the highest and the last, for if there were any latent corruption or corruptibility this vision of the All Holy would detect it, and the perishable would perish, the mortal would die; but there is no film or stain, for they are without fault before the throne of God)—when, therefore, ours is that resurrection body, then shall the words of Isaiah receive their full and final realization, *Death is swallowed up in victory.*[j] Yea, so certain is the everlasting triumph that, sublimely apostrophizing Death and Hell, the Apostle exultantly challenges these prostrate, disarmed, and powerless foes, and, in language borrowed from the prophet Hosea,[k] demands, *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*

The conflict had been tremendous. *The sting of*

[j] Isa. xxv. 8. [k] Hos. xiii. 14.

death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. Death, the king of terrors, had reigned over the fair dominions of the Lord of life. He had touched with his dart every saint of God, save Enoch and Elijah, and they had yielded to its icy point. For the very law of God had clothed this last enemy with next to Almighty power, affirming, The wages of sin is death, and the soul that sinneth it shall die.

But thanks be to God, a mightier One than Death itself, even the Eternal Word made flesh, came and grappled with this awful foe. He undertook, as man's surety, the sin of man. It was no imaginary transfer, but a real stupendous transaction. He, the second Adam, staggered and shuddered under the load. The strength of the enemy was law, that law which hath its seat in the bosom of Deity, and is the expression of the all-perfect will of God. But the Captain of our salvation bared His bosom to the stroke. The envenomed dart was sheathed in His sacred side. Incarnate Love bore the curse of offended Justice. Hence His exceeding great and bitter cry, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? He paid the penalty to the very last mite. He drank the cup to its lowest dregs. He died: and that which was the

crowning miracle of Divine love, the Incarnation, the indwelling of all the fulness of the Godhead in a human soul and body, was here in part and for awhile dissolved, for the human soul and body of our Lord were for three days severed. See what sin hath wrought. Let all the power of the foe be confessed. It only illustrates the more the grace and power of our Redeemer. He by dying has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel of His resurrection.

Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! What glory rests on every word that composes the Victor's name. *Jesus:* omnipotent to save His people from the guilt and the power of sin. *Christ:* the Anointed of God, anointed without measure with the infinite grace of the Holy Spirit. The *Lord:* co-equal and co-eternal Jehovah. *Our* Lord: unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government is upon His shoulders.

In this Victor God gives us the victory. This is far more than merely undoing the effects of the fall. To take up the former figure of this chapter, it is not the seed-corn which died being restored to its former

germinal state, and becoming a seed-corn again after once dying in the earth: nay, it is the seed-corn appearing as the blade, the ear, the full corn in the ear, with all graceful and fruitful luxuriance. So it is not that our bodies are to live again as Lazarus' body lived, a mortal body still; nay, this mortal shall put on immortality; death shall have no more dominion over us. It is swallowed up—lost—in victory. Not a vestige remains of the ruin. The earthly house of this tabernacle is transformed into a building of God eternal in the heavens.

Reader, is death for you a disarmed, a stingless foe? Can you answer Monod's simple but searching question, *Pouvez-vous mourir tranquil?* Can you humbly claim your part in that versicle of the Te Deum, which you so often sing, When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers? If not, let me pray you to reflect you are going forward to meet an enemy under whose sting the Incarnate Son of God groaned in agony. My brother, be not so fool-hardy; the contest is hopeless; even Omnipotent love cannot reverse the sentence otherwise than in Christ. O look upon His cross and live!

But if you are Christ's, death for you is a vanquished foe: yea, it does the work of a friend, introducing you into His presence where is fulness of joy. A simple incident shall tell a world of truth. Not long since an angry bee flew into a room where a mother was sitting with her little child playing by her side. The child was terrified; but the bee settled on the mother's outstretched hand, and stung it severely, and left its sting there; and when the mother showed the child the sting, the little one's heart was at rest: though the bee was not dead, it was stingless.

Yes, Jesus seems to lay His right hand upon each one of His children as He laid it on the beloved John in Patmos, and to say to us, Fear not: I am He that liveth and was dead: and I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of Hades and of death. This it is which enables us calmly to anticipate the time when the Master shall call us to His rest, or come for us in the clouds of heaven; and this it is which supplies that consolation, so strong in its tenderness and so tender in its strength, when those whom we love and revere are summoned a little while before us into His more immediate presence. Though to the eye of sense all seems so drear and desolate, as it wanders

from the portrait on the wall to the vacant chair, and a great gulf seems fixed between things seen and things unseen, to the eye of faith they who are Christ's form still one whole family undissolved and indissoluble, albeit some are in heaven and some on earth. For are not they with Jesus? and is not Jesus with us? And are not they and we for ever one in Him?

(7) THE WORK OF FAITH.

THEREFORE, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

THEREFORE, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. So closes this sublime and glorious argument for the resurrection. The Gospel is the most practical of all things: it claims the work of faith, the labour of love, and the patience of hope.[1] And what a grasp of motive is here! Seeing that Christ is risen, that the objections of the sceptic are baseless, that ye who are Christ's shall with Him possess the everlasting kingdom, that ye have been baptized for the dead, and have cast in your lot with them, that

[1] 1 Thess. i. 3.

the resurrection body shall be fitted for its high functions, and that ye in body, as well as in spirit, shall bear the image of the heavenly, that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh when the dead shall be raised and the living changed, and that ye erelong shall raise the glad pæan of triumph, O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?—seeing these things are so—facts, incontrovertible facts, wrought by God in time past, or promised by Him in time to come,—*therefore, my beloved brethren,* an address of peculiar and pathetic tenderness after all the faithful warnings and expostulations the Apostle had uttered; twice before[m] he had called them brethren, but now, in anticipation of their standing together before the Son of Man, love finds yet tenderer words: *be ye stedfast,* firmly seated, like the oak grasping the earth with its tenacious roots, or builded like the citadel on the rock; *unmoveable,* resisting all pressure from without, not swayed hither and thither with divers and strange doctrines, not terrified by your adversaries, not fickle in your love to Him who has saved you with so great a salvation; *always abounding in the work of the Lord*—holiness

[m] Vv. 1 and 50.

and usefulness, those works which alone will stand the final trial when the earth and the works which are therein shall be burned up. It is blessed to be permitted in any way to be engaged in the Lord's work: this is the characteristic of every saint, as the Apostle writes immediately after of Timothy, For he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do.[n] But more, *abounding* therein, like the beloved Persis at Rome, who laboured much in the Lord;[o] yea, abounding therein *always*, not intermittently. It is not a sudden spasmodic effort which will suffice; the tide is against us; we must labour at the oar, in season and out of season; the opposition is constant, and the effort must be constant likewise, until it becomes a second nature and instinct. We somewhat lose the force of the word rendered "be" in our translation; it is strictly "become ye."[p] On looking back we may be deeply conscious how often we have failed in time past; but He giveth more grace, and we are called to increase in His Holy Spirit more and more until we come to His everlasting kingdom. Nor is the issue doubtful: *Our labour is not in vain in the Lord.* It is true that now we are compassed with infirmity, that we consign to the

[n] 1 Cor. xvi. 10. [o] Rom. xvi. 12. [p] γίνεσθε.

grave those who sleep in Jesus, that we ourselves shall soon follow them, and that we see not yet that body which shall be; but this does not shake our faith. We know whom we have believed; we know that all things are working together for our good; we know that we have a building of God; we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him. Be it that we have to build on the promises alone: they are enough, amply enough; for we are fully persuaded that what our God hath promised He is able also to perform. And therefore, though now we go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, we doubt not that we shall come again with rejoicing, bringing our sheaves with us.

We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. (1 JOHN iii. 2.)

. . . . Our spiritual body was the same in type,
In face and form and fashion, as on earth,
Yet not the same,—transfigured: suited this
For the quick motions of the new-born spirit,
As that for all the functions of the flesh;
Obedient to our faintest wish, as was
Sometime the disembodied soul; yea, more,
So willingly responsive, that it woke
Wish to exert, where exercise itself
Was pleasure.

Would I speak, my tongue was fain ;
And language copious, yet precise and clear,
Embracing all the loftiest thoughts enshrined,
In all earth's dialects, flow'd from my lips
Spontaneously, catching the finer tints
Of mingled light and shade, like photographs
Of contemplation. Would I touch my harp,
The very touch was music, and enticed
Melodious words. The opening eye drank in
Such scenes of beauty, and the listening ear
Such trancing harmonies, audience and sight
Seem'd sweet necessity. Or would I move,
Volition, without wings, or nimble tread
Of footsteps, wafted my aërial form,
Swifter than sunbeams glance from East to West,
Whithersoe'er I would, as mortals move
Their hand or foot by motion of swift thought,
A body meet for heaven, as that for earth ;
One from the other nascent : that the root,
This the fair flower : even as the hyacinth,
With its pavilion of green leaves, and wealth
Of blossom and rose-tinted petals, springs
From a dull dismal bulb, which none who saw,
And knew not of its latent power, could dream
The cradle of such loveliness, yet each
Meet for its home, for the rain-nurtured soil,
And the soft kisses of the playful air ;
And each to each indissolubly join'd.

And when instinctively we raised our eyes
From contemplation of the heavenly forms,

Now ours for ever, to the Prince we loved,
To thank Him who had made us thus, behold
These bodies of our glory could sustain
More of His glory than the naked spirit ;
Our pure affections His affections clasp'd ;
And every power within us had some hold
On His omnipotence. Like imaged like.
And, as with us, so was it with the rest :
To all a vast promotion of their bliss,
To each the increase, as each sow'd on earth.
Love only can know love. And as they loved,
They knew Him. As they knew Him, they return'd
His lineaments of beatific light :
So glory is proportionate to grace.

PART III.

MEDITATIONS AT THE GRAVE.

DE PROFUNDIS.

¶ *When they come to the Grave, while the Corpse is made ready to be laid into the earth, the Priest shall say, or the Priest and Clerks shall sing,*

MAN that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cut down, like a flower; he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay.

In the midst of life we are in death: of whom may we seek for succour, but of Thee, O Lord, who for our sins art justly displeased?

Yet, O Lord God most holy, O Lord most mighty, O holy and most merciful Saviour, deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death.

Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts; shut not Thy merciful ears to our prayer; but spare us, Lord most holy, O God most mighty,

O holy and merciful Saviour, Thou most worthy Judge eternal, suffer us not, at our last hour, for any pains of death, to fall from Thee.

THIS lamentation is the cry *de profundis* of the mourners to God. The last sounds of the Apostle's triumphant words have fallen upon our ears. We have left the calm sanctuary of peace. We have come forth under the open sky. The wind blows, perhaps the rain falls upon us and upon the exposed coffin. The bystanders can gaze upon our grief. There is altogether a shelterless and unroofed feeling compared with the tender guardianship of the house of prayer. And then the sexton and his helpers, it may be, all strangers to us, are handling that which contains the sacred tabernacle of our beloved—they are nearer to *it* than we—our separation from *it* has begun—they are preparing to lower it into its long resting-place. And as they ply their needful but strange work, these words, in measured tone, or solemn song, break the oppressive silence : Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cut down, like a flower, and never continueth in one stay.[a]

[a] Job xiv. 1, 2.

Thus the Church has again recourse to the experience of Job for the utterance of her grief, and confesses, in his language, the fleeting vanity of life. Nor can we marvel at this; for as the Apostle Paul, in the New Testament, is the noblest human pattern of untiring labour in Christ's cause, so is the patriarch Job, in the Old Testament, the most signal example of suffering affliction and of patience. And these words of his, so touching in themselves, have a tenfold pathos, as prefacing the calm resignation and persistent hope which follow: "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease: though the root thereof wax old in the earth and the stock thereof die in the ground, yet through the scent of water it will bud and bring forth boughs like a plant. But man dieth and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up; so man lieth down and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep. O that Thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that Thou wouldest keep me secret, until Thy wrath be past; that Thou wouldest appoint me a

set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come."[b] Thus we, who with Job anticipate the morning of the resurrection, when the heavens shall be folded up as a vesture, and the faithful dead shall be waked out of their sleep and put on the glorious apparel of immortality, with him bewail the brevity and misery of our mortal life. If the words "man that is born of a woman" touch the deepest chords of a child's heart towards the mother that bare him, they also remind us that it was through Eve sin entered into the world. Contrasted with that sinless and toilless and deathless priesthood on the earth, for which God originally created man, we must all, even those whose life has been the holiest and happiest and the most prolonged, in this sin-stricken world confess, with the aged Israel before Pharaoh, Few and evil have the days of the years of my pilgrimage been.[c] They, who sow in hope, yet sow in tears. Man cometh up like a flower, breathing fragrance in the dewy morning: but smitten with the sun or touched with the sickle, it falls, and all its exquisite grace withers, and its leaves are showered on

[b] Job xiv. 7—14. [c] Gen. xlvii. 9.

the earth and mingle with the kindred soil. Our days are as a shadow that declineth: there is none abiding.

If the lesson be ever learned, if the truth be ever confessed, ere the sentence of death is fulfilled in ourselves, surely it will be by the open grave of one we love. There is a relief in acknowledging all. Let the thoughts have free vent, or they will gnaw the heart within.

Yes, in the midst of life we are in death. That which has befallen our beloved, may befall us any day, any hour. Now we are in the midst of life; and its countless duties claim our strenuous regards. Perhaps it was so a few weeks—aye, a few days since, with the one beside whose tomb we are standing. O that we may consider our latter end, and remember that ere-long we must give account of our stewardship! We are in death, not only in the land which death overshadows, but the seeds of mortality are sown in our very frame. Our outward man is perishing. Let us dare to face the fact. "The living know that they shall die."[d] There is a dignity in this knowledge which elevates us; and, when allied to faith, it may rise to the sublimest heroism.[e] Let the unbelieving world be confounded and dismayed at the brink of

[d] Eccl. ix. 5.

[e] *See* Acts xx. 24.

Jordan: let the proud philosopher throw up his arms wildly for aid that comes not, as he feels the dashing of those cold waters around him: the child of God has a sure refuge when flesh and heart are failing him. This the saints of every age have proved. And to this, with the wreck of mortal hopes before our eyes, confessing our sinfulness and the just displeasure of our God, yet confiding in His love, the love which gave Jesus to die in our stead, in this hour of our desolation, we instinctively and perseveringly turn.

We are standing before God, the thrice holy, omnipotent Jehovah, glorious in holiness, and yet the most merciful Saviour of those who trust in Him. Eternity seems bared to our view. We seem to gaze through the gates of the grave on the terrible issues of unforgiven sin. The bitter pains of the second death are no fiction of man, but the solemn revelation of God.[f] There is the worm that never dies: there is the fire that never shall be quenched: there is everlasting punishment: there is irreversible banishment from His presence, where is fulness of joy.[g] But from this wrath to come Jesus died to save us. If the cry be wrung from our hearts, Lord,

[f] Rev. xx. 14, 15.

[g] Mark ix. 44, 46, 48; Matt. xxv. 46; 2 Thess. i. 9.

save us, we perish, our inmost spirit responds to the voice of our Redeemer and Lord, My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of My hand: My Father, who gave them Me, is stronger than all, and no one is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand: I and My Father are one.[h]

Again we open the most secret recesses of our souls to the searching light of eternal love. All things are naked and opened to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. We would not have it otherwise. In such near contact with death, which has summoned so many of our beloved ones home, and must erelong summon us, we would not hide a thought from Him who alone is stronger than death. Our Father is looking down upon us from the throne of His mercy. If we only gain His ear, all is well. Our heart echoes the touching language of a dying saint, who, not long since, after a day of intense suffering, almost immediately before she breathed her last, dictated the lines,—

Oh, Saviour, I have nought to plead
In earth beneath, or heaven above,
But just my own exceeding need,
And Thy exceeding love.

[h] John x. 28—30.

The need will soon be past and gone,
Exceeding great, but quickly o'er :
The love unbought is all Thine own,
And lasts for evermore.

While we are in the flesh, we shall never get beyond the need of the cry of our solemn litany, Remember not, Lord, our offences, nor the offences of our forefathers, neither take Thou vengeance of our sins: spare us, good Lord ; spare Thy people whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy most precious blood, and be not angry with us for ever. Here then, once and again, we appeal to the most holy, most mighty, most merciful One. As suppliants at the throne of grace, we anticipate the time when we shall stand for judgment before the throne of glory. Between us and that tribunal is the hour of death ; will He fail us in our time of sorest need? Nay, God forbid. It may be with us as with our Master, who said to His enemies when they seized Him in the garden, Now is your hour and the power of darkness.[1] It may be that the devil may reserve his worst assaults for nature's extremity, but our prayer will live before Him then. No pains of death shall separate us from His love ; they

[1] Luke xxii. 53.

shall only prove the birthpangs of immortality ;[j] and the emancipated spirit, as it enters the bliss of Paradise, shall sing the triumphant song of the Psalmist with a new emphasis of meaning, I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications: the sorrows of death compassed me, the pains of hell got hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow: then called I on the name of the Lord,—O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul. Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. I was brought low, and He helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.[k]

Is it possible that the Father would forsake His child, when the child most needs His supporting arm, His cheering word, His sympathy, His love? It is impossible. The watchword of our pilgrimage, as we near the river-banks, shall sound as heaven's music in our ears,—This God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide, even unto death, or rather, "over death."[l] Having brought His sheep through

[j] Compare "having loosed the pains (ὠδῖνας, "birthpangs") of death."—Acts ii. 24.

[k] Ps. cxvi. 1—7.

[l] Psalm xlviii. 14. The learned Dr. Kay translates the last clause, "He Himself will guide us over death," and says, "Hebrew, *Al-muth* :

the wilderness to the margin of Jordan, the good Shepherd will be with them in passing through the waters, and carry them in His bosom into the promised rest beyond.

Be the pathway smooth or thorny,
Dark with storms, or bright,
All along life's changeful journey,
Day and night;

Through the desert, wending lonely,
Or with lov'd ones nigh;
Bread to spare, or given only
As we cry;

Wayworn in its weary stages,
Or by crystal springs,
Where the smitten Rock of Ages
Comfort brings:

Onward still—come joy or sorrow,
Blossom or decay;
Knowing nothing of to-morrow,
Calm to-day.

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across the gulf of death, as He led Israel of old across the Red Sea and Jordan to the land of everlasting peace. How else could God prove Himself to be their God for ever and ever?" So the Septuagint renders it, αὐτὸς ποιμανεῖ ἡμᾶς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας: and the Vulgate, *Ipse reget nos in sæcula.* The Hebrew *nah-hag* especially denotes guiding a flock. Compare Ps. lxxviii. 52; lxxx. 1; and Isa. lxiii. 14.

God will be our Guide for ever,
To our latest breath,
Through the depths of Jordan's river,
Over death.

Over death, among the meadows
Where His own are led,
And in perfect day the shadows
All have fled.

Over death—all told the story
Of our earthly strife,
There to prove in Canaan's glory
Life of Life.

EARTH TO EARTH.

¶ *Then, while the earth shall be cast upon the body by some standing by, the Priest shall say,*

FORASMUCH as it hath pleased Almighty God of His great mercy to take unto Himself the soul of our dear *brother* here departed, we therefore commit *his* body to the ground ; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust ; in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be like unto His glorious body, according to the mighty working, whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.

HAVING committed our own souls to the holy keeping of our God, in the calm prospect of the hour of death and of the day of judgment, we now perform the last sad office of affection, and commit the sacred tabernacle of our beloved to its mother earth, in blessed hope of the resurrection to eternal life.

Now, for the first time in this service, we directly speak of the departed. Perhaps we could not have borne it, till we had fortified our stricken hearts with the great consolations of the Word of God. And now that we speak of the holy dead, it is in words of tenderest affection, *our dear brother,* or *sister.* When the tie is that between the children of the same father and mother, the expression comes home to the heart at once; but there is a peculiar and touching significance in it, when it tells the husband of the wife of his bosom, or the wife of her husband; parents of the child whom they have nurtured and brought up, or children of their venerated parents; masters of a faithful servant, or servants of a beloved master; friends and associates of a stranger in blood, and who yet was dear to them as their own soul. It leads us back to our common parentage. Have we not all One Father? We are His offspring. All live unto Him.

And He, the Father of us all, the Almighty God, with whom are the issues of life and death, has in His great mercy taken unto Himself the soul of our dear brother. It was His prerogative, and He Himself has done it. He loosed the silver cord: He broke the golden bowl. Our beloved may have died from one

of a thousand unforeseen chances and changes of this mortal life: the cause of death may have been through what we call accident; it may have occurred through the carelessness of others, or through failure of some ordinary precaution, or from the mournful wreck of reason, or by the yet more terrible hand of violence; it may seem to the eye of sense untimely and premature; but faith looks above and beyond all these second causes, to Him in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways. He has the keys of Hades and of death;[m] and not until He turned the mysterious wards of that unseen portal could the spirit be loosed from its tabernacle, or return to God, who gave it.

He has taken that soul to Himself; the child rests in its Father's embrace; the redeemed saint sleeps in Jesus. The one we mourn as absent from the body, is at home with the Lord. The cable has been loosed, and the spirit has departed, and is with Christ, which is far better.

Seeing therefore that God has, in His unfathomable wisdom and love, taken the soul of our departed friend into His nearer and more immediate

[m] Rev. i. 18.

presence, we, in humble submission to His primeval sentence on Adam, Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return, reverently and sorrowfully commit the lifeless body to the ground. It is the lowest depth of nature's humiliation. We know it; we confess it; we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. We part for a season from that which is so inexpressibly dear to us. We will not attempt to clutch at that which He has taken from us for awhile. Let there be an outward and visible sign of the deep moral and spiritual truth which is being graven on our hearts. Let earth be cast upon earth, ashes on ashes, dust on dust. Though every tender feeling of our bosom vibrates to the fall of the clay upon the coffin, and though the sound may echo in our memories for years to come, so let it be: it is the seal and sacrament of death. The last enemy has done his worst. The earthly house of this tabernacle is being taken down.

But stay; this is not all; the sentence is unfinished. Scarcely have the words, Dust to dust, fallen upon our ears ere the ministering priest continues, In sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life.

The words were designedly, and after much controversy, made general, "In sure and certain hope of

the (not *his* or *her*) resurrection to eternal life," that the Church might avoid the appearance of pronouncing definitively on the everlasting state of all those whom she commits to the grave. The prayer of Solomon would rebuke any such claim to omniscience, Give to every man according to his ways whose heart Thou knowest; for Thou, even Thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men.[n] But it is evident that the whole service is composed by the Church on the judgment of charity, that her deceased members were in heart what they were in name, disciples of Jesus Christ. There are indeed a few discriminating and cautionary sentences, as in the rehearsal of the voice from heaven, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord" (reminding us there are those who die not in the Lord); as in the prayer for ourselves and all those that are departed in the true faith of Thy holy name (warning us that there are, alas, those who depart not in this faith); and as in the closing Collect, when we meekly beseech our Father that, dying, we may rest in Jesus, and add, "As our hope is this our brother doth"—sentences which lead all who survive to search their own hearts and see that

[n] 1 Kings viii. 39.

they are right in the sight of God.[o] But I repeat, it is evident that the service contemplates the burial of a believing and true member of the Church of Christ. And in so doing it follows the course pursued by the inspired Apostle in the great lesson just read from the Epistle to the Corinthians. It is throughout the language of holy hope. In countless cases, it need not be said, not a shadow of a doubt clouds that hope in the mind of those who stand around the tomb of their friend. He has been known by his fruits on earth, and now his record is in heaven. And then with what delightful assurance and joy of faith we echo the words, In sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life.

In some things we can admit uncertainty, and even rejoice in it as the chosen sphere of trust. It is so as to our future earthly lot. So Brainerd sings,—

> I know not what may befall me:
> God tenderly shades my eyes,
> And so each step in my onward path
> He makes new scenes to arise.

[o] There is also the prohibition prefixed to this Order for the Burial of the Dead, that the Office ensuing is not to be used for any that die unbaptized, or excommunicate, or have laid violent hands on themselves.

I see not a step before me,
  Yet I journey without a fear :
The past is still in God's keeping,
  The future His mercy will clear,
And what looks dark in the distance
  May brighten as I draw near.

For perhaps the dreaded future
  Has less bitter than I think :
The Lord may sweeten the waters,
  Before I stoop to drink ;
Or, if Marah must still be Marah,
  He will stand beside the brink.

I journey on, "not knowing ;"
  I would not if I might :
I would rather walk in the dark with God
  Than walk alone in the light ;
I would rather walk with Him by faith
  Than walk alone by sight.

This witness is true. But there are other things in which we can suffer no uncertainty. There are great veritics, of which we must be able to say not only, We hope ; but, We know. Fear would be torment. For ourselves, we must be able to say, I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day : we know that we are of God : we know that all things work together for good to them that

love God: we know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens: we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.[p] And so, for those who have fallen asleep, are we certified that they were indeed Christ's? Then nothing but a sure and certain hope of their blessedness now, and of their resurrection to eternal life hereafter, would satisfy the cravings of our heart, or befit the dignity of our standing as their brethren, children of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

Nor is our confidence unfounded. It is built wholly on the one foundation, our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change the body of our abasement that it may be like unto the body of His glory, according to the mighty working whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself.[q] When we say that ours is a sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life of

p 2 Tim. i. 12; 1 John v. 19; Rom. viii. 28; 2 Cor. v. 1; 1 John iii. 2.

q On this rendering of the words, "our vile body," "His glorious body," see foot-note, pp. 136, 137.

those who sleep in Jesus, ours are no vain words. We do not speak into the air. As we slowly walked from the lych-gate to the church, we heard the voice of Jesus saying, I am the Resurrection and the Life; we seemed to catch the accents of the departed, replying, I know that my Redeemer liveth; and in holy submission we replied, The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. As we gathered with our brethren in the house of God, we, with David, wrestled with our sorrow till we could say with him, And now, Lord, what is my hope? truly my hope is even in Thee. With Moses we clung to the Lord our God, who has been and is our dwelling-place in all generations; and then, in the obedience of faith, we listened to the magnificent argument, in which St. Paul proved that Christ has risen from the dead, the first-fruits of them that slept, till our very souls vibrated to his challenge, O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? It is true that since then we have come forth from the shelter of the courts of prayer, and in deepest humiliation have cast ourselves upon the mercy of our God, and have now committed the body of our beloved to its last resting-place, earth to earth,

ashes to ashes, dust to dust. But our faith is no reed shaken with the wind. Our hope is not one that makes us ashamed. Nay, it is founded on the Rock of Ages. With His own right hand, and with His holy arm, the Captain of our Salvation hath gotten Himself the victory; and we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

Surely, if we may transfer human conceptions to the world of spirits, it must cause dismay and discomfiture and impotent despair among the powers of darkness that in the hour of their deepest self-abasement, in the very agony of their grief at their separation for awhile from the beloved tabernacle of the departed saint, the children of God should thus calmly rehearse and re-echo words that tell of their final and everlasting triumph. If their confidence were in the arm of flesh, it might be falsified by the event. But Jesus Christ is their hope; and He has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. He travels in the greatness of His strength, mighty to save. He has trodden the wine-press alone; and the year of His redeemed shall shortly come. He is able to subdue all things to Himself, and will He not do it? Hath not God put

all things under His feet, and given Him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all? And will He suffer those sacred tabernacles of His saints, in which they have rendered Him the loving service of their earthly life, to remain death's trophies in the grave? Let His own words give the answer, This is the Father's will, which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.[r] And that which is the Father's will is His likewise, for He has prayed, Father, I will that those whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory.

Meanwhile, until the day break and the shadows flee away, we are indissolubly one with those who have passed within the veil. And when next we draw near with faith to the table of their Lord and ours, that table at which we have so often knelt with them in happy days gone by, with what marvellous tenderness the words fall upon our ears, Therefore, with angels and archangels, *and with all the company of heaven*, we laud and magnify Thy glorious name, evermore praising Thee, and saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord

[r] John vi. 39.

God of hosts: heaven and earth are full of Thy glory: glory be to Thee, O Lord most High. Amen.

As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come.—1 COR. xi. 26.

Till He come—O let the words
Linger on the trembling chords;
Let the little while between
In their golden light be seen;
Let us think how heaven and home
Lie beyond that "Till He come."

When the weary ones we love
Enter on their rest above,
Seems the earth so poor and vast,
All our life-joy overcast?
Hush, be every murmur dumb:
It is only, till He come.

Clouds and conflicts round us press:
Would we have one sorrow less?
All the sharpness of the cross,
All that tells the world is loss,
Death, and darkness, and the tomb,
Only whisper "Till He come."

See the feast of love is spread;
Drink the wine, and break the bread:
Sweet memorials,—till the Lord
Call us round His heavenly board,
Some from earth, from glory some,
Sever'd only, till He come.

THE BLESSED HOLY DEAD.

¶ *Then shall be said or sung,*

I HEARD a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, From henceforth blessed are the dead which die in the Lord: even so saith the Spirit; for they rest from their labours.

THE last great utterance of faith in the resurrection of the just after the likeness of their victorious Lord has attuned the ear to catch, and prepared the heart to receive, celestial voices regarding the present blessedness of the holy dead. And surely sometimes, as we have stood by the open grave, the beatitude heard by John in Patmos has seemed to come down to us from the very throne of God, and has shed the balm of heaven upon our wounded and weary spirits.

The believer's life is a life of benediction. When first he tastes the sweetness of God's pardoning and reconciling love, he proves, Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered.[s] As he sets forward on the pathway of obedience, he is met by the assurance, Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.[t] Step by step the beatitudes greet him, Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are they that mourn, blessed are the meek, blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness, blessed are the merciful, blessed are the pure in heart, blessed are the peacemakers, blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake.[u] All along his pilgrim-path the double benediction of Abraham rests on the child of faith, I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing.[v] In prosperity he sings, Blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God.[w] Even under the rod he confesses, Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of Thy law.[x] And, be the trial never so sharp and severe, he solaces himself with the inspired meditation, Blessed is the man that

[s] Ps. xxxii. 1. [t] Ps. cxix. 1. [u] Matt. v. 3—10.
[v] Gen. xii. 2. [w] Ps. cxliv. 15. [x] Ps. xciv. 12.

endureth temptation; for when he is tried he shall receive a crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.[y] So that we may truly say that even here in this life, notwithstanding its many sorrows, the people of God are called to inherit a blessing.[z]

All the blessedness of time however is only a seed-sowing for the harvest of eternity, only a prelude of the perfect joy that is to come, when in the last day Jesus will say to those on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.[a] For then shall the emphatic language of our Lord be fulfilled, Thou shalt be blessed, for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.[b]

But between the believer's chequered joy on earth and that future eternal felicity, which lies beyond the resurrection, there is the intermediate state of departed spirits who are absent from the body and present with the Lord. And whether we think of them who sleep in Jesus, or consider that, if Christ does not return in our lifetime, the Paradise of the blessed dead

[y] James i. 12.
[z] 1 Pet. iii. 9.
[a] Matt. xxv. 34.
[b] Luke xiv. 14.

is the next stage before ourselves, it must needs be a subject of the deepest interest for us to inquire what light the Word of God throws upon their condition. Here eminently it becomes us to tread with humility, to take no partial views of truth; not to seek to be wise above what is written, but reverently to gather up every scattered ray of Divine revelation. Thanks be unto God that we have the plain, transparent, unambiguous witness of His voice from heaven, Blessed are the dead which die[c] in the Lord.

For we cannot deny that the condition of disembodied saints is a state of imperfection. St. Paul declares this expressly, These all having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.[d] And, again, he emphatically says, Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life:[e] that is to say, the body is

[c] "The dead which die," *οἱ νεκροὶ οἱ ἀποθνήσκοντες*. The *νεκροὶ* shows that it is not the dying believer, but the believer after death, that is intended; the *ἀποθνήσκοντες* shows that it refers to the present dispensation, when believers *are dying* in the Lord, and falling asleep one by one.

[d] Heb. xi. 39, 40. [e] 2 Cor. v. 4.

the clothing of the spirit, and the unclothed (disembodied) state is not the consummation of our hopes. These are important as New Testament recognitions of truths so frequently and forcibly stated in the Old Testament, truths which at first sight have a very dark and depressing aspect, such as, "In death there is no remembrance of Thee. Shall the dust praise Thee? There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest. The grave cannot praise thee; death cannot celebrate Thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth."[f] We must not ignore these and such like Scriptures, or they will recur in hours of desolation, and disquiet us most when we most need tranquillity and assurance and comfort. How then are we to understand them in connection with other Scriptures, which certify us of the conscious blessedness of departed saints? Doubtless the solution of the mystery is, that this mortal body of ours, so fearfully and wonderfully made, belongs to God. He formed it for His praise. We are called to glorify God in our body and in our spirit, which are God's.[g] Now God has

[f] Ps. vi. 5; xxx. 9; Eccl. ix. 10; Isa. xxxviii. 18.

[g] 1 Cor. vi. 20.

joined this body and spirit together: their union is the result of the counsel of His love; their separation one from another is the result of man's sin.[h] And this is the reign of death in its earthly aspect, the present triumph of the king of terrors.[i]

And in all these lamentations over the grave and those who go down to it, the eye of the sacred writers seems to have been fixed either upon the body which turned to dust, as in the words, *Shall the dust praise Thee?* in which view the expressions have their full weight, or else upon the powerlessness of the immortal spirit to reanimate its own natural tenement, and to make its own familiar organ vocal; or, finally, on this earth as the allotted theatre of man's service and worship. When death called the saint away, his praises could no longer swell the songs of the Church militant. When David gave up the ghost, his harp might be touched by others, but not again by the sweet Psalmist of Israel. And thus the disembodied state is a state of imperfection, an abnormal state, a state in itself bearing witness to the triumph, though only a present and transient triumph, of sin and death.

[h] Gen. i. 26; iii. 19. [i] Rom. v. 14.

But while we must freely and fully admit that the state of departed saints is one of imperfection and incompleteness, as separate from the body until the resurrection morning, let us see its excellency and blessedness, notwithstanding this imperfection, as in part revealed to the Old Testament saints, and much more clearly to ourselves.

In the first place, it is a state of rest. There, says Job, the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.[j] And so Isaiah writes, The righteous is taken away from the evil to come: he shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds; (to which is immediately added, as if to negative the suspicion of mindless repose) each one walking in his uprightness.[k] This seems the prominent thought in the word *sleep*,[l] which is so frequently used of death; relating perhaps first to the body, which is laid in the grave as in a bed, but also, regarding the saints, to the quiet rest of the spirit when the day's work is over. And all the former testimony of Scripture to the calm repose of those who die in the Lord is crowned by the last witness, They die that they may rest from their labours. O

[j] Job iii. 17.

[k] Isa. lvii. 1, 2.

[l] *See* Dan. xii. 2; John xi. 11; Acts vii. 60; 1 Thess. iv. 14.

sweet and blessed rest! rest from physical toil; rest from mental weariness; rest from pain and from anticipation of the shadows of death; rest from the disquietude of dim and indistinct views of truth; rest from the consciousness of leaving so much undone; rest from grief for grieving the Spirit; rest from struggling for the souls of others; rest from all warfare with the powers of darkness! When we are made to feel, All things are full of labour, man cannot utter it,[m] how much this one word *rest* tells us of the blessed dead.

Secondly, it is a state of consciously living to God. In proof that the rest of those who sleep in Christ is no condition of unconscious inactivity, but of intelligent fellowship with God and fruition of His love, it would suffice to adduce the emphatic words of our Lord, who, when expounding the declaration, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, says, He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him.[n] With Him, as we shortly after confess in our service, the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity.

[m] Eccl. i. 8.

[n] Luke xx. 38.

Thirdly, to die in the Lord is to enjoy the manifested presence of Jesus. The dominion over the dead was included in the great design of Christ's redeeming work; for we read, To this end Christ both died and rose and revived, that He might be the Lord both of the dead and living.[o] So He said to the dying thief, To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.[p] So the Apostle writes, To depart and be with Christ is far better;[q] and in another place affirms, We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord;[r] *present like a citizen at home in his own country*, as the word in the Greek implies. Wherefore, he adds, we labour (or rather, "are ambitious"), whether present or absent, to be accepted of Him—which establishes the fact that, in the disembodied state, the saints in the presence of Jesus covet and enjoy the honour of His complacent approval. If now the glimpses of our Lord are so delightful to the eye of faith, what will it be to see Him face to face, whom our soul loveth?

Fourthly, to die in the Lord is to enter Paradise; for Jesus said to the thief upon the cross, not only, To-

[o] Rom. xiv. 9. [p] Luke xxiii. 43. [q] Phil. i. 23.
[r] 2 Cor. v. 8—ἐνδημῆσαι πρὸς τὸν Κύριον.

day thou shalt be with Me, but, with Me in Paradise. Paradise, then, is one division of Hades—that Hades into which we know the disembodied human soul of our Lord went ;[s] and which is sundered by a great gulf into two divisions,[t] the respective habitations of the blessed and of the lost. But Hades signifies the unseen world, and its limits and locality are among the secret things which belong to the Lord our God. Seeing however that Paradise is the word used by the Septuagint for "the garden" of Eden, or Delight, that it was currently employed by the Jews to designate the place of peace and joy, in which the faithful dead awaited their joyful resurrection, and that our Lord on the cross solemnly sanctioned such usage, we may confidently conclude that this name of their home implies purity and felicity, and that those who dwell therein must enjoy a freedom from every sorrow, and a rich profusion of supply for every want.

Fifthly, to die in the Lord is to enter the delightful society of saints and angels. It is indeed strange that some Christians in our day should question the mutual recognition of saints in another world, and thus fall short of the standard which even the heathen attained.

[s] Ps. xvi. 10 ; Acts ii. 27 ; Eph. iv. 9. [t] Luke xvi. 26.

Man is conscious of his own existence, of his standing before God, and of his relationship to his fellow-men. In this threefold consciousness we live and move and have our being. You cannot disintegrate it. If, after death, I do not know myself as the same being I was before, it is not "I" who continue to live: if I do not recognize my unbroken relationship to God, all moral and spiritual connection of this world with the next is at an end; and so, if I do not know again those whom I have known on earth, my identity and individuality are lost. If I know myself then, I must know God, who made me; and if I know myself and my Maker, I must know my fellow-saints in the heavenly household.

There are those however who admit the recognition of saints after the resurrection, but deny it before. But this theory will not stand the touchstone of the Word of God. How frequently, when the saint dies, we read, *He was gathered to his fathers*, or *gathered to his people*; and this, when it could not possibly refer to the body being brought to the ancestral sepulchre, as of Aaron on Mount Hor, or of Moses on Abarim:[u] it is the spirit going to the great

[u] Num. xxvii. 12, 13.

trysting-place of those who have gone before. Then the appearance of Samuel's spirit to Saul at Endor proves incontestably that the spirit of one who is dead is recognizable, for *Saul perceived that it was Samuel.*[v] Samuel's body was lying buried in his house at Ramah, but his bodiless spirit was, by God's permission, seen and conversed with by Saul. How the lineaments of an immortal spirit were made visible and his tones audible to a mortal man we know not, but the plain historic statement does not admit of doubt. Again, how unambiguous are David's words regarding the infant he has lost, I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.[w] To this we may add the magnificent description, seen in vision by the prophet, of the descent of the King of Babylon to Hades[x]—the spirits below "narrowly look upon him and consider him," and ask tauntingly, "Is this the man that made the earth to tremble?" and if lost souls are recognized by the lost, will not the blessed ones who die in the Lord be welcomed by their fellow-saints as one by one they join the company of the redeemed in Paradise?

And so, when we come to the New Testament, in

[v] 1 Sam. xxviii. 14. [w] 2 Sam. xii. 23. [x] Isa. xiv. 12—19.

the narrative of the transfiguration, Moses, whose body was buried by God, and Elijah, who was translated, were known by each other and by the disciples, and are both said by St. Luke to have appeared in glory [y] —an expression which justifies the use of the word *glory* as applied to departed saints ; for although theirs is not yet the full glory of the resurrection body, theirs is the glory of the emancipated spirit. And then in the story of the rich man and Lazarus (and the name of the beggar being given seems to indicate that it is rather history than parable), the spirit of Lazarus is carried by the angels—probably his guardian angels —into Abraham's bosom. The father of the faithful is represented as knowing and comforting him, and the rich man knows both the patriarch and the beggar. Then how wonderfully is the holy communion betwixt saints and angels shadowed forth by the Apostle when he says, Ye are come (i.e. by faith, and in Jesus your Forerunner) unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the First-born which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to

[y] Luke ix. 31.

the spirits of just men made perfect.[z] And the apocalyptic vision seen by the beloved John[a] crowns the testimony of Scripture to the united adoration of angels and of saints as now gathered in the presence of Him that sitteth upon the throne and of the Lamb.

Taking the Word of God for our guide, let every doubt be for ever banished from our mind that when we depart to be with Christ, which is far better, we shall join in blessed communion the great cloud of witnesses who have fought the fight and finished their course, and for whom, as for us, a crown of righteousness is laid up in the day of His appearing.

Sixthly, to die in the Lord is to begin to enter upon the reward of faithful labour. This the close of the Holy Spirit's response to heaven's beatitude testifies, *Their works do follow them.* These words are omitted in our burial service, perhaps because that service is read over infants and those who, like the penitent thief, have found pardon on the threshold of eternity, as well as over those who have borne the burden and heat of the day. But how often, by the grave of a beloved fellow-labourer in the vineyard, do our hearts instinctively pursue the response to its

[z] Heb. xii. 22, 23. [a] Rev. iv. and v.

musical cadence, "and their works do follow them." There is some ambiguity in the expression in English, whether it may not refer to the effects on earth, after their death, of the labours of the saints. These effects doubtless surpass all human calculation. Shakspeare was wrong when he said,—

> The evil that men do lives after them:
> *The good is oft interred with their bones.*

No act of good perishes. It is like the fruit-tree, whose seed is in itself, after its kind, upon the earth. This, however, is not the truth revealed here. There is no doubtfulness in the Greek, which might be strictly rendered, *Their works do follow along with them.*[b] Nothing corruptible passes the gates of the grave. His pomp shall not follow the man of pride, nor his wealth the man of riches. But no toil, or time, or talent devoted to Christ ever perishes, or can perish. The memory is ever fragrant, the influence is ever powerful, and the reward commences when the soul enters Paradise.

And lastly, I would say the state of the blessed dead is a state of joyful expectancy. Thus Job says,

[b] ἀκολουθεῖ μετ' αὐτῶν.

All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.[c] They are among those who will welcome their returning Lord with the shout, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him.[d] The souls, we read, under the altar, cry, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?[e] White robes were given them, and it was said to them that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants should be fulfilled. This seems to indicate a knowledge in the holy dead, probably derived from Christ and from those who are continually leaving our society and joining theirs, of things transpiring on earth, and an earnest longing for the time when the mystery of God shall be finished. There will be no sorrow in this yearning; for thus they will only share more fully the mind of Christ, who is Himself expecting until His foes are made His footstool. A loftier and ever-nearer hope must animate every heart. The time is short, and the perfected glory certain.

Thus, while we admit that the state of the blessed dead is imperfect—imperfect personally, while their bodies are here in the grave, and imperfect socially,

[c] Job xiv. 14. [d] Isa. xxv. 9. [e] Rev. vi. 10.

while so many of their brethren are fighting their way here on earth—yet, seeing that they enjoy a heavenly rest from every grief and pain; that theirs is a spiritual life to Godward of a far higher intelligence than was possible here below; that they are with Jesus, whom to see was their most ardent desire in their most holy moments when in the flesh; that they repose and walk in the paradise of delight; that they know each the other whom they have known before, and are introduced to elder saints, and share the society of angels; that the imperishable fruits of their labours of love follow along with them; and that they are joyfully expecting the near accomplishment of all the counsel of God in the marriage-supper of the Lamb, and the establishment of the everlasting kingdom—we can and do subscribe with our whole heart to the Apostle's words, To depart and be with Christ is far better. Our dear Master's service is good, very good, here: His rest in Paradise is far better: His united service and rest in the ages to come is best of all.

And now, when we sum up in thought the testimony of Scripture to the felicity of those who sleep in Jesus, with what unutterable sweetness the voice from heaven falls upon our ears, Blessed are the dead who

die in the Lord, as we stand by the open grave which has just embraced the mortal tabernacle of the believer.

This manna from heaven is indeed the children's bread. For the very words solemnly remind us, it is not all who die that are blessed. Multitudes pass into eternity without Christ, and therefore without hope. As McCheyne says on this, "It is not all the dead who are blessed. There is no blessing on the Christless dead: they rush into an undone eternity, unpardoned, unholy. You may put their body in a splendid coffin; you may print their name in silver on the lid; you may bring the well-attired company of mourners to the funeral in suits of solemn black; you may lay the coffin slowly in the grave; you may lay the greenest sod above it; you may train the sweetest flowers to grow over it; you may cut a white stone, and grave a gentle epitaph to their memory; still it is but the funeral of a lost soul. You cannot write *blessed* where God has written *cursed*."[f]

It is not all the dead who are blessed, but they who die in the Lord. While they lived, they lived in Christ. They were brought into vital union with

[f] McCheyne's Memoirs, page 457.

Him through faith by the Word in the power of the Holy Ghost. They sheltered themselves in Christ, as Noah and his family sheltered themselves in the ark. They proved there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. They abode in Christ, even as a branch abides in the vine. Can death separate them from His love? Nay, to die is only to depart and be with Him in nearer, fuller, deeper, communion. They die in the Lord. Most beautiful and expressive words! The heathen longed to die in the light, as Keble paraphrases the well-known words, *ἐν δὲ φάει καὶ ὀλέσσον.*

> "Only disperse the cloud," they cry,
> "And, if our fate be death, give light, and let us die."

But here is something immeasurably grander and nobler—to die in the Lord—the Lord encompassing them on every side, His fatherly hand over them, His everlasting arms beneath them, His love embracing them, the glory of His presence meeting them as they open their eyes on the mysteries of the unseen world.

This beatitude the Holy Spirit re-echoes. The same Eternal Spirit, who has known all their secret griefs and joys and struggles, and labours and vic-

tories on earth, and who knows also the calm serenity of that rest which remaineth for the people of God—He utters His deep and Divine "Yea" to the voice from heaven. Shall not we answer, though it be with a voice broken with the great longing of our love, Amen and Amen?

Hush! Blessed are the dead
In Jesus' arms who rest,
And lean their weary head
For ever on His breast.
O beatific sight!
No darkling veil between,
They see the Light of Light,
Whom here they loved unseen.

For them the wild is past
With all its toil and care;
Its dry sirocco blast,
Its fiery noonday glare.
Them the Good Shepherd leads,
Where storms are never rife,
In tranquil dewy meads
Beside the Fount of Life.

Ours only are the tears,
Who weep around their tomb
The light of bygone years
And shadowing years to come:

Their voice, their touch, their smile,—
Those love-springs flowing o'er,—
Earth for its little while
Shall never know them more.

O tender hearts and true,
Our long last vigil kept,
We weep and mourn for you ;
Nor blame us :—Jesus wept.
But soon at break of day
His calm Almighty voice,
Stronger than death, shall say,
Awake,—weep not,—rejoice.

THE THREEFOLD MISERERE.

¶ *Then the Priest shall say,*

Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

WE have confessed the vanity of mortal life: we have committed the body of our beloved to the silent tomb: we have avowed our sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life: and we have listened to the far-off music of heaven, re-echoed by the Spirit in the Church Militant here on earth, telling us of the felicity of the holy dead. Shall we then immediately return from God's acre to our bereaved home? Nay, our sacrifice of prayer and praise is not yet finished. We linger for a little while at the footstool of the throne of grace. And now again, in that deep spirit of contrition which marks all

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the services of our Church, we throw ourselves upon the tender mercy of our God.

It seems as if the cry of the publican, standing afar off in the temple, deeming himself unworthy to lift up his eyes to heaven, but smiting upon his breast and saying, *God be merciful to me a sinner*, were never long absent from the minds of the compilers of our liturgy. This threefold miserere is interwoven with the order for morning and evening prayer, with the litany, with the office for holy matrimony, and the thanksgiving after child-birth, with the service for the first day of Lent, and with that for the visitation of the sick: and its spirit interpenetrates all the other offices of our Prayer-book. But never does it awaken a deeper suspense in the heart, than when we are standing by the yet unclosed grave of one, whom we shall not see again in the flesh until the day of the manifestation of the sons of God.

The threefold cry for mercy is addressed in the same words of humiliation and trust to the co-equal and co-eternal Father, Son, and Spirit.

Lord, have mercy upon us. Here we cast ourselves upon the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.[g]

[g] 2 Cor. i. 3.

We are here in His audience chamber. The name of His tribunal is *the mercy seat.* But the word has become so familiar that the meaning is too often dimmed, if not lost. Let us call it *the mercy throne.* Let us realize that it is in reality that which was shadowed forth in type by the golden mercy seat of the tabernacle, which was sprinkled with blood once every year, and of which God said to Moses, There will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony.[h] And when we His children are standing on the borderland betwixt time and eternity, now gazing by faith into that holy paradise where our brother is at rest, now contemplating the long and lonely path before ourselves,—when our innumerable shortcomings in the past weigh upon our heart, and perhaps new strange duties, which will now be ours without the one who so long has shared them, rise upon our view,—to whom should we look for pity and pardon and sympathy and consolation, but to the Father of our spirits? He delighteth in mercy. His mercy, unchangeable in this changing world, endureth for

[h] Exod. xxv. 22.

ever. And as He folds us in His paternal arms, He whispers by His Spirit to the broken in heart, As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, saith the Lord.[i]

Christ, have mercy upon us. Such as the Father is, such is the Son. The mercy throne derives its name and its meaning for sinners from the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb of God. St. Paul employs the same word, usually rendered *mercy seat*, to express the propitiation[j] of the cross. He is both Victim and Priest: He is both Advocate and Atonement.[k] And that cry for mercy, which in the days of His earthly ministry never failed to win His ear, still finds an instant echo in the bosom of our compassionate High Priest, who ever liveth to make intercession for us. Him the Father heareth always. And, as we plead His name, a gracious cloud of incense covers the mercy seat, and through the shadowing wings of cherubim we, in our widowhood, or orphanhood, or whatever our bereavement be, hear His voice as of old

[i] Isa. lxvi. 13.

[j] Rom. iii. 25: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation (ἱλαστήριον) through faith in His blood.

[k] 1 John ii. 2.

saying, I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you.[l]

Lord, have mercy upon us. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. It is through Jesus, by One Spirit, we have access to the Father. If ever there are thoughts for which we can find no words, they crowd upon us in hours of desolation like this. But the Spirit interprets and pleads our inarticulate groanings.[m] He knows all the intricacies of our hearts. Thoughts which we could not lay bare to any human friend, wayward thoughts, distrustful thoughts, repining thoughts, selfish and earthly thoughts, are all open to Him. And we would not have it otherwise; for He touches the bruised spirit with blood and oil. He whispers both peace and power. He is all that Jesus meant when He said, I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever.[n]

With such consolations this threefold miserere in our burial service is fraught for the people of God. But it may be some are standing round that open grave who in time past have been strangers at the

[l] John xiv. 18. [m] Rom. viii. 26. [n] John xiv. 16.

mercy seat; and perhaps the death of one they love has brought their sin to remembrance, their world-likeness, their ungodlikeness, their unpreparedness to die. They have solemnly asked themselves during the last few days, Where should I have been, if the messenger had come for me? The Holy Spirit has been striving with them. They are conscious of a burden they never felt before. They are among the weary and heavy laden. Oh, not seldom has the home-call of the saint been life from the dead to the sinner. Not seldom are words, which found their supreme accomplishment in Jesus and Him crucified, verified in His disciples, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.[o] Not seldom have days in a shadowed home been God's time of love. How many a child has proved a parent's death his own birth to everlasting life! And then, when the heart is broken, and the suppliant is feeling after God, if haply he may find Him who is not far from every one of us, what brief utterances can more fitly express the craving of the soul than this thrice-repeated cry to the Father, Son, and Spirit,—

[o] John xii. 24.

Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

Such a cry will be the touching of the hem of Christ's garment; and he who utters it with humble trust in the forgiving love of God shall, like the contrite publican of old, go down to his house justified; for the words of Joel, sealed at Pentecost, have lost nothing of their virtue by the lapse of years—Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

"THE TIME OF LOVE."

"*Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love.*"—EZEKIEL xvi. 8.

My God, my Father, dost Thou call
Thy long-lost wandering child to Thee?
And canst Thou, wilt Thou pardon all?
I come; I come; Lord, save Thou me.

O Jesus, art Thou passing by
With all Thy goodness, grace, and power?
And dost Thou hear my broken cry?
I come, I come, in mercy's hour.

O Holy Spirit, is it Thou,
My tenderest Friend refused too long?
And art Thou pleading, striving now?
I come, I come: make weakness strong.

Yes, Lord, I come: Thy heart of love
Is moving, kindling, drawing mine.
I cast me at Thy feet to prove
The bliss, the heaven of being Thine.

THE MASTER'S PRAYER.

OUR Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil. Amen.

IF the threefold miserere is interwoven with many of our services, the Lord's Prayer forms a part of all. And rightly, for the words fell from the Master's own lips—*When ye pray, say, Our Father.*[p] But what different tones this same voice of prayer seems to have, and what different thoughts it wakens in our hearts, when we plead it in the ordinary morning or evening service, or when we place the lambs of His flock into the Good Shepherd's arms in His own covenant of baptism, or when we seal our vows at confirmation, or

[p] Luke xi. 2.

when we kneel around His communion table, or when the ministers and stewards of the mysteries of the Gospel are solemnly consecrated to their holy vocation. The prayer is in unison with every changing scene of this transitory life. It comforts us as no other prayer can comfort, when we lie on the bed of sickness and of death. And it has a meaning peculiar to the hour of bereavement, as the mourners stand around the open grave of their beloved.

Our Father, which art in heaven. With what intense delight must Jesus have put these words into the lips of His disciples for their use and for ours, until He comes to take us to the Father's house! All the Gospel lies hid in these words, as the oak in the acorn. For are not sinners here invited to look up to the thrice holy Jehovah and cry, Our Father? And how is this possible save in that great manifestation of the love of God, of which St. John writes, We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world? [q] This name, Our Father, has met the careless and the worldly, the self-righteous and the proud, who would have closed their hearts against threats and censures,

[q] 1 John iv. 14.

and has disarmed their hostility, for it has approached them in their tenderest sympathies, and has called all their better feelings into play, and has pleaded with them as with a wayward child, and times without number has drawn the stubborn knees to the foot of the cross and to the throne of grace. This name has met the anxious and the broken-hearted returning from the ways of sin and sorrow, and has renewed in their mind's eye the almost faded picture of the repenting prodigal, When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him, and said, This my son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost, and is found. This name has met the humblest and the largest desires of every age and every rank in the great household of faith, who have been ever learning, under the tuition of the Holy Spirit, more and more of the fathomless meaning of His cry in their hearts, Abba, Father. But our Father is in heaven. Will an earthly parent be content to have his children always at school? Will he never gather them all together under the paternal roof? If we are God's children, then are we His heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. And our Elder Brother has gone to prepare

a place for us in the many mansions of the Father's house—His Father and ours. One by one the Father is taking His children home. And as we stand beside the grave and look through the mist of tears into the clear blue sky, the words, Our Father which art in heaven, have a deeper emphasis of meaning for us, and we feel and confess how eternally richer for every saint that enters Paradise the true home of our spirits is, and we pray that where our treasure is, there our heart may be also.

Hallowed be Thy name. This prayer must have risen irrepressibly to the lips of Jesus Himself from His earliest human childhood, till He ascended on high and led captivity captive. From eternity He had dwelt in His Father's bosom; from the first dawn of creation, as Himself the beaming forth of the Father's glory and the express image of His essence, He had drawn forth and attracted around His Father's throne and name all the homage and trust and love of every created intelligence. He had heard the music of that name in all the melodies and harmonies of heaven. But, when He, who was rich, for our sakes became poor, what met His eye in this dark sin-distracted world? The children had rebelled against their

Father. There was enmity against God; there was hatred among brethren; there was confusion and every evil work. Oh, for some mighty bond which should reunite these disobedient children to their Father, and these quarrelsome children to one another! What name has power and virtue in it sufficient to bind all who will yield to its suasive influence in the links of filial and fraternal love? There is only one name—Our Father. Let this be honoured and magnified and held in supreme reverence, and it will subdue unbelief, control disobedience, banish enmity, foster trust and love and peace, and make a Paradise again of this desolated world. When Jesus, who ever abode in His Father's love, was teaching us to pray, it seems almost a necessity that this should be the first petition. And, from the time we first knew what prayer meant, we doubtless have felt the marvellous power of this suppliant adoration. These few words have again and again raised us above the mists and conflicts of this valley of tears, to kneel by our kneeling Lord on the holy mount. There a bright cloud has overshadowed us, and, though we have often feared as we entered into the cloud, the words have fallen unbidden from our lips, Lord, it is good

to be here. So it has been with us in years gone by. But now, as we stand by the open grave, the words seem fraught with a tenderer power than ever before. We remember how the saints we mourn hungered and thirsted after holiness. We muse on the inexpressible delight with which they are worshipping within the veil. And we are sure that in this act of supplication at all events our thoughts and theirs, our longings and theirs, our confidences and theirs, are fixed on one object, and blend and flow together in one stream of holy desire. As we pray this prayer—a prayer which the spirits of the just made perfect must needs be also praying before the throne—we grasp with a firmer hold the communion of saints.

Thy kingdom come. There are hours when the heart needs all the tenderest consolations of Scripture; and then, perhaps, no prayer seems to suit our need but that of Hezekiah, O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me;[r] and no promise but that of Jesus, Come unto me, ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.[s] The doctrine of the word of life must drop as the rain and distil as the dew, and the gentleness of the Holy Spirit must pour

[r] Isa. xxxviii. 14. [s] Matt. xi. 28.

oil into the smarting wound. But there are other hours when we realize the strength of evil rather than its misery. We feel so much within us, and hear of so much around us and far off, which is wrong, that it is rather the Victor than the Physician, rather the King than the Comforter we seem to crave. Now the Gospel meets all that is in man. And at such times, when we are appalled at the power and oppression of the enemy; when we yearn with an intensity of desire, that that which is wrong within us and around us should be set right; when, seeing the foundations of the earth are out of course, we long for those heavens and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, and cry, Oh, that He would come whose right it is,[t] then perhaps there is no prayer more animating and supporting than this, Thy kingdom come. It is the assurance, He must reign, breathed in supplication at the mercy seat. Then we thank God for the might of these words. They are not the vineyard and the olive-yard, the quiet valley and the shaded spring: but they are the mountain heights with their clear, transparent, invigorating air, from which we may catch a glimpse of the celestial city.

[t] Ezek. xxi. 27.

Such they have often proved to us. And if ever we need strong consolation, is it not when we have just committed the lifeless body of our beloved to the silent tomb? The last enemy holds this trophy for a while. But seeing that Emmanuel has taught us to pray, Thy kingdom come, and that for eighteen centuries this cry from His elect has been going up day and night to God,[u] we know that the vision, the prospect of which fills our soul with rapturous delight, is for an appointed time; though it tarry, we will wait for it; for it will surely come, and will not tarry.[v] We are willing to wait the time of Him who is "patient because eternal." And herein, too, we are in sympathy with the souls beneath the altar who cry, How long, O Lord, how long?[w] They are waiting for us. It is only for a little season. And then we and they shall swell the tide of those great voices heard in heaven at the sounding of the latest trumpet, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever.[x]

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. To

[u] Luke xviii. 7.
[v] Habak. ii. 3.
[w] Rev. vi. 10.
[x] Rev. xi. 15.

approach this subject aright we must again remind ourselves, it is a child's cry to its Father. Even amongst ourselves, fallible as human judgment even the ripest may prove, and short as human confidence even the truest may fall of a perfect standard, how often will a trustful dutiful child say, "As you think best, father: I had really rather you decided for me." Nay, how often will children in thought attribute more wisdom and power to a parent than he possesses, rather exaggerating than detracting aught from his supposed resources. Why this trust, this clinging, this self-renunciation? It is partly nature, partly culture, partly experience. The child knows his parent's love, and has been taught to repose in his parent's larger knowledge, and has proved from infancy his parent's single desire for his best and highest good. Is such the confidence of a dutiful child in a human parent? and shall not we the rather implicitly confide in the omniscient love of our Father in heaven? Shall not we pray from the very ground of the heart, Thy will be done?

The standard indeed which our Lord proposes, *as it is in heaven,* is a perfect standard. Whether we regard the fulfilment of our Father's will by the blessed

angels, or by those who, freed from the burden of the flesh, are in the joy and felicity of Paradise, or rising yet higher by the Eternal Son who abides ever in His love, in heaven it is done without fault, without weariness, without intermission. And that such a prayer should have been put into our lips by Jesus Christ is in itself a fact full of encouragement; for there is never anything unreal or excessive in the aspirations which He bids us plead with God. Our hopes cannot transcend these words. They ought to brace and invigorate us in every claim of duty. They bear upon our struggle with indwelling corruption: how fearlessly we may assault and overcome it with these words ringing in our ears! They bear upon our striving after more grace: there is no presumption in praying to be filled with the Spirit; for how otherwise can His will be done in us? They bear upon the service which we each one have to render; for His will is that we bring forth much fruit. They bear upon the suffering which we have to suffer, and the daily cross we have to take up for our Master's sake: it is our Father's will: here is rest and strength. And they bear upon the final triumph of the kingdom of Christ; for who hath resisted His will? He

will not fail nor be discouraged till the knowledge of the glory of the Lord covers the earth as the waters cover the sea.

But helpful as the words are at all seasons, never are they more divinely blessed than in the hour of bereavement. The sunshine of our home is darkened; the voice of song is hushed; life to some of us can never be again what life has been, for the pure and lovely spirit who was ripening for glory, ere we were aware, has been taken from us, and left a void no human friend can fill. Shall we then quite sink and fail? Nay, this prayer is as an angel from heaven strengthening us: Thy will be done. This is no bare submission, though that is something: this is not only resignation, though that is more: but this goes far deeper, and rises far higher. It is prayer. It is a real desire and petition that our Father's will should be done, though it overshadows all our after-path here on earth. It is no stoical hardness, but a child's victorious confidence in a heavenly Father's love. It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good.

Give us this day our daily bread. There are those who would interpret this clause spiritually, and apply it to the bread of life for the soul. But we must be

very jealous of attributing a figurative meaning to the plain, simple, practical words of our Lord. Here, under the plea of spiritualizing prayer, it would secularize life. With the desire of making our worship more heavenly, it would make our daily walk more earthly. Direct worship can, with most of us, occupy but small portions of every day; and yet we are commanded, whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, to do all to the glory of God. Now this is only possible by committing the work of our daily life to God, by casting on Him the burden of every care, and by depending on Him for the supply of every want. Nor let us for a moment think that God demeans Himself when He deigns to regard our earthly needs. Condescension is not degradation. Never is a monarch so truly great as when he stoops to the lowest of his subjects. And in this prayer we acknowledge our entire dependence upon God. It is put into the lips of all alike, poor and rich, young and old. The poor man, whose daily labour is his daily food, and who is the bread-winner for his wife and children, having prayed this prayer, rises from his knees with a lightened heart, for he has committed his care to his Father. The child is taught to pray it from early childhood:

wherefore? Do not others take the burden of providing? Yes; but the child must be taught to look through them to its Father in heaven. Parents may die, friends may fail; but God has promised, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. The active strenuous architect of his own substantial business, and the rich man whose accumulated stores might seem to raise him above any fear of need, are yet led by this prayer to pray with the humblest and the poorest for that which is the very staff of life. Why? Is it that the schemes of the wisest are sometimes baffled, and that the citadel of wealth may crumble into dust, and that the years are drawing on when the possessor of earth's best things must exclaim, I have no pleasure in them? These are, indeed, some of life's most impressive warnings; but this prayer in their mouth seems rather the constant acknowledgment in the midst of wealth and power, and work and possessions, All things come of Thee; they are Thy gift; daily received from Thee, daily to be laid out for Thee. Yes, the very wording of this prayer, Give us *this day* our daily bread, teaches us we see not into to-morrow. Each day has its own claims, its own duties, its own needs, and will have its own supplies from a Father's

bounty. His eye is over us for good: His ear is attentive to the voice of our cry: let us be willing to go even as He leads us by the hand; and we shall prove that He will give us bread to eat and raiment to put on until we reach our Father's house in peace.

These thoughts, which cluster round this petition all along our pilgrim pathway, often come as a voice from heaven when death has desolated the home. It may be that the father of the family is struck down, the pillar on whom all leaned, or the wise and tender mother, whose loving eye seemed instinctively to read what each needed: and it adds to the sorrow of an aching heart to know that henceforth we must take up a load of earthly cares which are strange to us. But in this prayer we cast our burden upon the Lord, and He will nourish us. Or if the death of the one we mourn brings us no increase of earthly anxieties,—it may even sometimes diminish them,—this petition reminds us that our Father has fed those who have gone before us all their life long; and He will feed us, who are following them, with food convenient for us till we come to His house in heaven. The daily manna shall not fail, till we cross the river and enter upon the land that floweth with milk and honey.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. This petition also is breathed in the spirit of adoption, and hence the place it occupies. If the Lord's prayer had been mainly intended as the utterance of a convicted sinner awaking to a sense of his ruined condition, the first cry must have been, God be merciful to me a sinner. But are we praying as the beloved children of God, then how naturally we first desire that our Father's name should be glorified, and His will be done, and then cast every pressing earthly care upon Him who careth for us. Our heart glows with filial love. We draw quite near to Him. And then it is that in the light of His countenance we see ourselves. We are conscious that we owe Him perfect trust, and perfect love, and perfect obedience, and perfect praise. Alas! we have left undone that which we ought (owed) to have done, and we have done that which we ought not to have done. Our negligences and ignorances, our shortcomings and transgressions are debts. And so it stands in the sermon on the mount, Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.[y] What has our trust been, what our love, what our service. what our gratitude? Let

[y] Matt. vi. 12.

us listen to our Father's voice and answer: let us stand by the cross and answer: let us open our heart to all the love of the Spirit, and answer. We are guilty,—guilty even in our own sight: and yet our perceptions are dulled, and we are prone to weave excuses for ourselves: what must we be in His eyes who chargeth His angels with folly? Only one prayer can rise to our lips, Forgive us. And we know that if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

Of this forgiveness the plea, which our Lord has taught us to urge, *As we forgive them that trespass against us*, is a further pledge. For do not we, who are compassed with infirmities, continually forgive others their trespasses? Be it that they have grieved us, yet they come and acknowledge that they have done us wrong, and ask our pardon: and we forgive them. How much rather will our Heavenly Father, since Christ has died and Justice no longer forbids, forgive us! This *as we forgive* is a plea with God, not a prior condition to our forgiveness.[z] It is the argument of one who has already tasted that the Lord is gracious. The persistent refusal to pardon another would

[z] *See* Eph. iv. 32.

prove, we knew not what pardon was ourselves. In forgiving others, we imitate God who has forgiven us. Do any ask, What if our brother, having wronged us, refuses to acknowledge that he has done us wrong? Still we forgive to the utmost limit of our power. If he refuses to confess the injury, he cannot have the comfort of our pardon;—it would be useless to tender it to him;—but there it is, ready for his acceptance. So far as we are concerned, there is no root of bitterness, no sting in our hearts: we have plucked it out—often no very easy task—at the foot of the cross. But there, ourselves forgiven ten thousand talents, our brother's offences are but as the small dust of the balance. Do we thus forgive? How much more will the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, forgive us!

Is such the significance of this petition in the Lord's Prayer at all times, surely it is tenfold precious to us as we stand by the open grave. There the memory of the irrevocable past, with all its failures and shortcomings and sins, would overwhelm us if it were not for the cleansing blood of Jesus, and our Father's reconciling mercy, and the Holy Spirit whispering

peace. We seem very near that other world into which our friend has entered. We know that he now is one of the palm-bearing multitude, who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. We know that no mortal weakness now dims the lustre of his charity. We know that he embraces us now with a Christ-like love; and we long to be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. If a single hard thought towards any, who are yet our fellow-travellers on life's rough way, lurk in some secret fastness of our heart, we drag it forth and slay it and bury it that very hour. We shall soon ourselves pass, as our brother has passed, within the veil into the Shekinah light of perfect love; and for the little while that lies between, God helping us, we will love one another even as Christ has loved us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. The forgiven man shrinks from contact with sin. He who has washed his robes would fain keep them unspotted from the mire of this world. He is so happy in his Father's love, that he cannot bear the thought of any cloud coming betwixt him and the joy of that reconciling countenance. If indeed our God and Father sees it needful, for the trial of our

faith and the proof of our obedience, to cause us to walk through divers temptations,[a] then we shall surely trust our heavenly Guide, who has promised that He will with the temptation make also a way of escape,[b] and shall rejoice in the blessed assurance that, being found faithful in trial, we shall hereafter receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him. Then we shall remember that when tempted we are suffering, not sinning. If we yield we sin; but when, by God's grace, we resist and overcome, we are treading in the footsteps of our Master, who was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Nevertheless, knowing our own exceeding frailty, and the subtle seductiveness of this naughty world, and the dark malignity of the great enemy of our souls, the prayer of our life will be to be hidden in the hollow of our Father's hand. We shall earnestly pray, as our Church teaches us in so many parts of our liturgy, that God would keep us both outwardly in our bodies, and inwardly in our souls, that we may be delivered from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and

[a] James i. 12. [b] 1 Cor. x. 13.

hurt the soul; that we, obeying His will and alway being in safety under His protection, may abide in His love unto our lives' end; that He would grant unto us pardon and peace, that we may be cleansed from all our sins and serve Him with a quiet mind; that we, being ready both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things which He would have done; and that it may please Him to save and defend us in all dangers, ghostly and bodily; and that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure and holy, so that at the last we may come to His eternal joy.

This prayer, *Deliver us from evil*, as put into the lips of His struggling and suffering Church by her omnipotent Lord, anticipates the final victory of Divine goodness. And as we stand beside that grave, which now holds the body of our beloved till He come, the time seems very short to the eye of faith ere the words of that great voice out of heaven shall be verified, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death,

neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.[c] This incorruptible, undefiled, unfading inheritance is reserved in heaven for us; and meanwhile we are kept for it by the power of God.[d] His presence will go with us and give us rest. The one we love even as our own soul may have been taken from us; our path may seem lonesome indeed, stretching on into the wilderness which lies betwixt us and Canaan; but God will never relax His almighty grasp of our feeble hand, and loneliness is not desolation while we can look up into His face and say, Our Father.

Ye shall leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, for the Father is with Me.—JOHN xvi. 32.

Alone,—it must be so:
Break, heart, or disentwine.
The Master calls me, and I go;—
Rest mine, and labour thine.

Alone at break of day;
I am not by thy side:
The sunny sky is leaden grey,
The wide world waste as wide.

[c] Rev. xxi. 3, 4.

[d] 1 Pet. i. 4, 5.

Alone in life's long toil;
I cannot share thy prayers,
Nor lighten by the faintest smile
Thy daily load of cares.

Alone, when night steals soft
Over the weary soul,
And thoughts of heart communion oft
Crowd in beyond control. . . .

* * *

Say, is the child alone,
Whose hand the Father holds;
Or whom unseen but not unknown
The Friend of friends enfolds?

And still in calm or storm,
In throngs or desert rude,
Beside thee moves His radiant Form:
Is this thy solitude?

At daybreak He is there,
With healing in His wings,
And in the quiet midnight air
The balm of Gilead brings.

He calls me to His throne;
I go with Him to be:
And lonely thou art not alone
While He abides with thee.

THE SACRIFICE OF PRAISE.

Priest.

ALMIGHTY God, with whom do live the spirits of them that depart hence in the Lord, and with whom the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity; we give Thee hearty thanks, for that it hath pleased Thee to deliver this our *brother* out of the miseries of this sinful world; beseeching Thee that it may please Thee, of Thy gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of Thine elect, and to hasten Thy kingdom; that we, with all those that are departed in the true faith of Thy holy Name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in Thy eternal and everlasting glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SELDOM did our Lord and Master put a higher honour on His disciples than when, the same night in which He was betrayed, He said to them, *If ye loved Me ye would rejoice because I said I go to the Father, for My Father is greater than I.*[e] Nothing is so grateful to a generous

[e] John xiv. 28.—*My Father is greater than I.* The perfect equality of the Son with the Father as touching His Godhead, has been proved

heart as being trusted. No trust is so delicious as that which counts on our cherishing the purest motives and acting upon the highest principles. And what a lofty unselfishness Jesus here took for granted in His Apostles. There was no denial, no questioning even, of their true love and victorious sympathy with His joy in this *If*, or this *Ye would rejoice*. The traitor had left them; the faithful eleven only were with Him; and He who knew all things knew that they loved Him:[f] He, who foresaw all

again and again in this Gospel (ch. i. 1—3; v. 17—27; x. 30, 38). Godhead admits of no degrees: it is absolute, infinite, supreme, incomprehensible, from everlasting to everlasting. This, then, cannot refer to Christ's nature or essence as God. It may either have respect to His eternal generation as the *Son* of the Father, and to the relation expressed in the words, *the Father not begotten* (ἀγέννητος), *the Son only begotten* (μονογενής):—that which is expressed in the words of the Athanasian Creed, "The Son is of the Father alone," not that, as Beveridge says, One is before Another, but only in order and relation to One Another. It may have respect to this highest mystery; or it may express our Lord's then state of humiliation, being made a little lower than the angels, having taken upon Him the form of a servant, and thus from His low estate looking up to His lofty exaltation, when His Father should give Him, as Mediator, a Name which is above every name. Perhaps both truths underlie the words, *My Father is greater than I;* but the prominent thought is our Master's joy n returning to His Father's throne in glory.

[f] John xxi. 17.

things, foresaw that after His ascension from Olivet they would return to Jerusalem with great joy.[g] But His words would quicken the love and deepen the sympathy.

He first reminds them, *Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away and come again to you ;* and then adds, *If ye loved me, ye would rejoice.*

His return must needs be the coronation of joy to his own, for it would be their reunion for ever with Himself and with all the members of His mystical Bride in the presence of His Father and of the blessed angels. But was His going away unmingled sorrow? Nay, was it more sorrow than joy? It must be sorrow —deep sorrow, for they loved Him with a close personal attachment of which perhaps earth has never known the equal, and love ever craves the presence of the Beloved. But was it not also joy, yea, deeper joy, because He, whom they loved so truly and intensely, was going to the bosom of His Father? It was even so : their great personal grief was overborne by their greater delight in His felicity and glory. For thirty-three years He had lived the life of faith, compassed with all the sinless weakness and weariness of our

[g] Luke xxiv. 52.

mortal flesh, despised and rejected by a cold captious world, exposed to all the malice of hell; but now, one short sharp passage traversed, He was about to return, His mighty work of salvation accomplished, to the triumphant songs of angels and the eternal gratitude of the spirits of the just made perfect, and the infinite communion of His Father's complacent love. An unutterable inconceivable beatitude. And by all the love they bore Him, His disciples would subordinate their sorrow to His joy. They would *rejoice from their sorrow.*[h] Oh, what unselfish affection He gave them credit for! And justly. If they had been asked, they would not have detained Him, when His Father's work was finished and the time had come for His being received up into glory. Surely it is well for us sometimes, like the chosen eleven, for awhile to sink all thoughts of self and lose ourselves in our Master's joy.

I say for awhile. We must not dissociate His *I go away* from the words *and come again to you*—words which were only the echo of the promise, *If I go away I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am ye may be also.*[i] It is not by crushing

[h] Jer. xxxi. 13.

[i] John xiv. 3.

self-love (self-love is not selfishness), but by subordinating it to the love of God, that we shall attain the mind of Christ and drink into His Spirit. The annihilation of self, which some advocate, would be a moral and spiritual suicide and is utterly abhorrent to the word of truth. Not the death or even the mutilation of our will, but its renewal and entire living submission to God's will is the triumph of the cross. We are drawn from the broken cisterns of this world that we may drink of the well of living waters. If Jesus had never purposed to return and to receive them to Himself, His disciples could not—it would have been a spiritual impossibility—they could not have rejoiced in His going away. But He called them to no such hard and incredible simulation of joy. He told them that it was only a little while, ere they should see Him again; that during the interval the Comforter should abide with them and reveal Him to their hearts, nor did He leave them till He had pleaded in their hearing His omnipotent prayer, *Father, I will that they whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory*.[j] And now we can the rather understand that supreme act of unselfish love on which He

[j] John xvii. 24.

securely reckoned, If ye loved me, ye would rejoice because I go unto the Father.

It is from this lofty platform of present self-denial and of the realization of a far more exceeding and eternal felicity, that we can most readily respond to the prayer which follows the Lord's prayer in our Burial Service, and join in that great sacrifice of praise, We give Thee hearty thanks for that it hath pleased Thee to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world, beseeching Thee that it may please Thee of Thy gracious goodness shortly to accomplish the number of Thine elect and to hasten Thy kingdom.

Here we thank God from the heart for the departure of one whose presence was perhaps the light of our home, and we pray him for the speedy ingathering of the harvest into His garner. Does this betoken a hard stoicism of soul? or worse, a pretension of exalted feeling which is alike unnatural and impossible? Nay, we must consider the words which precede and follow this utterance of grateful affiance. With hearts attuned to filial trust by the prayer which Jesus has taught us, we first look up to our Father and say, Almighty God, with whom do live the spirits of

them that depart hence in the Lord, and with whom the souls of the faithful are in joy and felicity. Nor do we suffer our wing to flag or our words to fail until we have prayed, That we and all those that are departed in the true faith of Thy holy Name may have our perfect consummation and bliss both in body and soul in Thy eternal and everlasting glory. As we offer this sacrifice of praise we stand in thought between the present blessedness of the holy dead and their full and final beatitude at the last Easter of the Church. We seem now, like Moses from the height of Pisgah, to look down into that Paradise where they are with Christ, which is far better, and now again to look onward and upward into the ages to come, when the risen saints shall enter and enjoy for ever the many mansions of the Father's house which Jesus has prepared for them. And our humble thanksgiving to God beside the yet unclosed tomb of our beloved is only in unison with the prayer we have so often pleaded together, "that through the grave and gate of death we may pass to our joyful resurrection for His merits who died and was buried and rose again for us."[k]

[k] Collect for Easter Even.

We have already dwelt, when pondering the voice which John in Patmos heard from heaven, on the calm felicity which they now enjoy who depart hence in the Lord; on their delightful emancipation from every toil and every sorrow; on that spiritual life to God-ward which is theirs—a life of far higher intelligence than is possible while they are burdened with the frailties and infirmities of the flesh; on their fruition of the presence of Jesus, whom to see was their most ardent desire in their most favoured moments here below; on that paradise of delight, the very vestibule of the temple of glory, in which they walk; on the sweet and ennobling intercourse which they sustain with saints and angels; on the reward of those works of faith and love which they have already begun to reap; and on the lofty hope which animates them of the near accomplishment of all the counsel of God in the marriage supper of the Lamb, and in the establishment of His everlasting kingdom. We plant our feet firmly on these sure and certain facts of revelation. And into this felicity our beloved has entered. While we trod the rough path of the world by his side, or while we smoothed his bed of languishing, how we longed to spare him pain, and to supply his every

need, and to wrap him round in the tenderness of our love. By his death, as in a moment, God has placed him for ever beyond the reach of grief and suffering and privation and disappointment and unrest, and has introduced him into the society of heaven. And by all the love we bear him, though our heart bleeds afresh as our lips utter the words which seem to pierce even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, We thank Thee, O our Father, for that it hath pleased Thee to deliver our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world.

These words have been true as uttered over the graves of our fathers and our fathers' fathers in generations past, but for ourselves in these last perilous days they have a peculiar significance. Heavy clouds are hanging over the Church of God. We may anticipate that the last birth-pangs of creation will be the severest. And, when merciful men are taken away, the words of the prophet instinctively flash across our memory, The righteous is taken away from the evil to come.[1] And again, not knowing the things that shall befall us, and knowing that our brother's lot is perfect uninterrupted peace, the words abide with us,

[1] Isa. lvii. 1.

as we look up to our Father with whom his spirit lives, We give Thee hearty thanks. It is the fragrance of crushed myrrh, but it is inexpressibly sweet and penetrating.

But this is not all. The Paradise of the blessed dead is only the prelude to the glory that shall follow; and in this act of mingled prayer and praise we look on to the perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, which will be theirs and ours in the eternal and everlasting glory of Jesus Christ our Lord.

This felicity is the chosen theme of the exceeding great and precious promises of the Word of God. These are the things which God has prepared for them that love Him: eye has not seen them, nor ear heard them, neither have they entered into the heart of man; but God has revealed them to us by His Spirit.[m] These are the things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, which the Apostle bids us seek, and on which he beseeches us to set our affections.[n] The light was comparatively feeble under the elder covenant, before Jesus abolished death and illuminated life and immortality; but even then it

[m] 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10. [n] Col. iii. 1, 2.

shed a peaceful and holy radiance upon the path of those who walked by faith, and confessed that they, as strangers and pilgrims on the earth, were mindful of a heavenly fatherland, and looked for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God.[o]

In proof of this, passing by the witness of the other Old Testament writers, though so impressive in their cumulative weight, it may suffice to listen to the heavenly melodies of the sweet Psalmists of Israel. They tell us of the abiding perpetuity of the saints; of their resurrection, as certified by that of Messiah, their Prince, to tread a path of life which leads to fulness of joy at God's right hand; of their awaking satisfied with the likeness of their God; of their fruition of length of days for ever and ever; of their eternal dwelling in the house of the Lord; of their inheriting the goodness laid up for them, and drinking of the river of Divine pleasure forth flowing from the fountain of life; of their redemption from the grave and gathering together before God; of their presentation in glory; of their entrance into a Sabbatic rest; of their enjoyment of God's mercy, which from everlasting has chosen them, and which will to everlasting

[o] Heb. xi. 10—16.

embrace them; of their service under One who abides a Priest continually; of their possession of an incorruptible righteousness; of their proclamation to the sons of men of the marvels of salvation; and to their swelling the songs of Hallelujah, which shall fill the universe with praise.[p]

Such is the witness of the song-book of the elder saints; but when we come to the New Testament, the glory is almost dazzling, from the abundance of the revelations. Upwards of two hundred and fifty verses there point us onward to the resurrection and to that which lies beyond, and tell us of the estate and employment of the glorified saints. We have already dwelt on the perfection of the spiritual body as a responsive organ to every desire of the perfectly regenerate spirit,—that body which will be raised in incorruption, glory, and power,—a body fashioned like unto the body of our Master's glory by Him who is able to subdue all things to Himself.[q] And this physical perfection will only be a worthy expression

[p] Ps. i. 3—6; xvi. 9—11; xvii. 14, 15; xxi. 4; xxiii. 4—6; xxxi. 19; xxxvi. 8, 9; xlix. 15; l. 5, 6; lxxiii. 19—26; xcv. 11, as interpreted in Heb. iii. and iv.; cii. 25—28; ciii. 15—17; cx. 4; cxii. 9; cxlv. to cl.

[q] *See* pp. 136—138.

of the intellectual and spiritual perfection within. *Then shall we know even as also we are known*;[r] that is, so far as our faculties extend (for no finite being can ever attain omniscience), our knowledge of Christ will reflect and resemble Christ's knowledge of us, being perfect, symmetrical, and unperplexed. Then we shall be holy, as He is holy: for has He not chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love?[s] And is He not able to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy?[t] Yes, then that which is perfect shall have come, and that which is in part shall be done away—the body responsive to every volition, the mind clear as the light, the spirit filled with love, the whole complex man clothed with the beauty of unstained and undeclining holiness.

Then is Paradise rest? Far higher is the final rest of the glorified saints. For Christ, we read, having ceased from His mighty work of redemption, entered into His rest; and He says, *Where I am, there shall also My servant be.*[u] Then He promises that we shall

[r] 1 Cor. xiii. 12.
[s] Eph. i. 4.
[t] Jude 24.
[u] John xii. 26.

recline, as at a banquet, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: and in yet more marvellous words of grace, that He will gird Himself and make His servants who have watched for His return sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.[v] There we shall eat of the celestial fruits of the tree of life, and hunger no more: there we shall drink of the crystal river, and thirst no more; for there the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed us and lead us to living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.[w] Could words express more delightful refreshment or more perfect repose?

There too we shall enter on the full reward of the inheritance.[x] This expression of the Apostle combines the thoughts of retribution and of grace; for if reward implies recompense, inheritance implies a free gift. An inheritance is not purchased, but descends to the heir by lineage or bequest. This two-fold aspect of heaven's joy is continually presented to us in Scripture. First, it is an heritage: we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ (this is our only title-deed): it is our

[v] Matt. viii. 11, and Luke xii. 37.

[w] Rev. vii. 17.

[x] Col. iii. 24.

Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom; and the Son of Man will welcome us to glory with the words, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.[y] But it is no less certainly the recompense of the reward.[z] To His persecuted saints Jesus says, Great is your reward in heaven.[a] The entertainment of Christ's poor will be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.[b] The builders of the spiritual temple, if their work abides, shall receive reward.[c] Yea, whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.[d] What a vista this one promise opens! No faithful labour, from the drudgery of the most menial employment to the loftiest responsibilities of authority, forgotten or unrequited. The connection betwixt the life of godliness here and the eternity of glory hereafter is as strict and close and necessary as that betwixt the seed and the plant which grows from it. They that sow to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.[e] Every trial of true faith, though tried with

y Rom. viii. 17; Luke xii. 32; Matt. xxv. 34.
z Heb. xi. 26. a Matt. v. 12. b Luke xiv. 14.
c 1 Cor. iii. 14. d Eph. vi. 8. e Gal. vi. 8.

fire, shall be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.[f] And every one who has dealt faithfully with the talents intrusted to him shall hear the words, Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful in a few things: I will make thee ruler over many things.[g] Thus, while all the saints will adoringly acknowledge that they owe their standing in the kingdom entirely to the free sovereign love of God, that their eternal life is His free gift through Christ Jesus, and that the glorified Bride is all she is for the Bridegroom's sake, there will be the delicious sense of appreciated affection, of rewarded work, and of the crown which we cast at His feet being a real token of victory achieved.

There royalty will be combined with ministry. He, who has loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, has made us kings and priests unto God.[h] During the millennium the saints will live and reign with Christ[i] over a renovated earth. And the closing words of the vision of the New Jerusalem, the light of which penetrates the eternal ages beyond, are these, *They shall reign for ever and ever.*[j] Govern-

[f] 1 Pet. i. 7. [g] Matt. xxv. 21. [h] Rev. i. 6.
[i] Rev. xx. 4. [j] Rev. xxii. 5.

ment implies service : he that ruleth must do it with diligence, and doubtless, when we reign with Christ, the royalty will demand the strenuous though untoilsome exercise of every power. And priesthood implies all the varied ministries of worship ; and so, we read, *They serve Him day and night in His temple.*[k] In that heavenly sanctuary is heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps.[l] The saints will then be equal to the angels, whose delight it is to minister to the children of men. And when we are assured that the Church is the body of Christ, the fulness of Him who filleth all in all, are we not humbly permitted to infer that, as we perform all the functions of our mortal life by means of the various members of our body, so will the Lord hereafter carry on the administration of His heavenly kingdom through His bride, the Church ?

Furthermore. in that blessed society not one saint shall be wanting. Now the holy dead are waiting for us. But then no stone shall be lacking in the spiritual temple. The whole family, which is now part in heaven and part on earth, shall then all meet in the presence of their One Father. The bride shall be

[k] Rev. vii. 15. [l] Rev. xiv. 2.

without blemish or defect. What perfect union and communion this image implies! But not more perfect than the reality, for then will the Eternal Father have gathered together in one all things in Christ which are in heaven and which are on earth.[m] And for this celestial society there will be suitable and everlasting habitations; the new heavens and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness; the Paradise of God; the many mansions of the Father's house prepared for us by Christ Himself; the holy Jerusalem; the city which hath foundations, situate in the heavenly fatherland; the sanctuary of the King of kings corresponding to the Holy of holies in the Jewish tabernacle, where they have no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof.[n]

And this leads us to the crowning felicity of the risen saints, even perfect and uninterrupted communion with God in Christ. They shall see Jesus, and the beatific vision shall stamp them with His likeness for ever.[o] He shall present them before His Father, and confess them to be His own.[p] Then shall they know

[m] Eph. i. 10. [n] Rev. xxi. 23. [o] 1 John iii. 2.
[p] 2 Cor. iv. 14; Luke. xii. 8.

the full meaning of the words, Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.[q] And thus in His immediate presence shall they drink for ever of the crystal river proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.[r] The Triune God will be their eternal inheritance.

In this passing glimpse which we have taken of the coming glory, the Word of God has employed all the images of the purest and deepest human joy—a happy home, a fruitful garden, the social pleasures of citizenship, the luxury of doing good, the delight of active work, the refreshment of repose, the shouting of harvest, the rich provision of a banquet, the power of music, the honour of a royal presentation, the exultation of victory, the prize of the successful competitor, the high responsibilities of government, the ministrations of priesthood, and the communion of heart with heart, which a holy bridal seals and consummates—all, all are exhausted to shadow forth the felicity which awaits us. This at least we may say, that whatever earth has of delight, heaven has; only that as the heavens are higher than the earth, so much will the perfect bliss of eternity transcend the fragmentary

[q] Matt. v. 8. [r] Rev. xxii. 1.

joys of time. The things which are seen are temporal: the things which are not seen are eternal.

Now, so far as in us lies, we must suffer all the converging rays of the coming glory to shine down upon our stricken hearts, if we would rise to that great act of sacrificial praise which our Church leads us to offer beside the open grave. It is not only that our brother is delivered from the burden of the flesh and from all the miseries of this sinful world: it is not only that now his spirit lives with God in joy and felicity: it is far more. His death is a step in the mighty progression of the Church towards her final and everlasting victory. Since Jesus died and rose again, it is a further pledge of the resurrection to eternal life. Nor is the separation for long. God will shortly accomplish the number of His elect. He will make up His jewels. As our brother is, so we shall shortly be. Unless the Master first returns, which is the sum of all joy, we shall very soon rejoin the one, whose loss we now so sorely mourn, in the Paradise of rest; and there we shall await with him the blessed morning of the resurrection. We are on the way to cloudless, limitless, endless felicity. Love cannot die. No grain of this celestial gold perishes. The gifts of

God are without repentance. Shall we not give Him hearty thanks for them? We will; we do. And as we thank Him, we believe that He, who inhabits eternity, inhabits also the praises of a contrite and humble spirit, and will in His own infinite tenderness revive the spirit of the humble and the heart of the contrite ones.

The world passeth away and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.—1 JOHN ii. 17.

. . . . . Oh, they sickened not, nor faded into fond imaginings,
For true joys, if only true, immortal are 'mid mortal things.
Whilome they were golden lamps, that o'er our pilgrim pathway shone,
Whose dear light we fondly bless'd, and wended unrepining on;
And, when number'd with the past, they sank not in the misty sea
With the foul and baseborn glimmer of the world's false-hearted glee,
But majestically rose, an apotheosis of light,
Till they clomb the dark blue heaven stars for ever mid the night,
And, thence shining on our pathway from their glorious home afar,
Tell us of the things that have been, that they shall be, and they are.

EXCELSIOR.

The Collect.

O MERCIFUL God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Resurrection and the Life; in whom whosoever believeth shall live, though he die; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in Him, shall not die eternally; who also hath taught us, by His holy Apostle Saint Paul, not to be sorry, as men without hope, for them that sleep in Him; we meekly beseech Thee, O Father, to raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness; that, when we shall depart this life, we may rest in Him, as our hope is this our *brother* doth; and that, at the general Resurrection in the last day, we may be found acceptable in Thy sight; and receive that blessing, which Thy well-beloved Son shall then pronounce to all that love and fear Thee, saying, Come, ye blessed children of My Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world: grant this, O merciful Father, through Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Redeemer. Amen.

ET once more the voice of supplication, which feeling after perfect felicity had rested in pleading the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, rises from the group of bereaved friends, as they stand

around the open grave. And well is this called the collect of the Burial Service; for, indeed, it collects the choicest of all the thoughts that had gone before, and presents them in one last solemn prayer to God.

In this prayer we cast ourselves again upon Him who delights in mercy; we build on the blessed truth that our Father and our God is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; we remind ourselves once more of the words, which first fell upon our ears as we entered the churchyard, I am the Resurrection and the life; we renew our assurance that the holy dead who sleep in Jesus shall live, and that we the living who trust in Him shall never die; and furthermore, we comfort ourselves with the strong and tender consolation which bids us not to sorrow, like the hopeless world, over those who depart hence in the Lord, for when Jesus comes in His glory they shall come with Him, and we and they together shall enjoy eternal and unbroken communion in His presence.[8] Calmed and consoled by these assurances we, His children, meekly beseech our Father to raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness. We long to be holy, as they who sleep in Jesus are holy. And then

[8] 1 Thess. iv. 13—18.

we tranquilly anticipate the close of our mortal pilgrimage. We plead that, when our journey is over, we may enter our Saviour's rest. And now faith gathering strength as we pray, we ask for a gracious acceptance in the day of our Master's appearing, and for a share in that beatitude which is the welcome-home to everlasting life. And all this we humbly but confidently implore of our merciful Father in that name which is above every name, Jesus Christ our Mediator and Redeemer.

The burden of the prayer lies in the petition, We meekly beseech Thee, O Father, to raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness; and it is thus in deepest harmony with the spirit of humble contrition and holy expectation which breathes in every page of our liturgy, and has made it the chosen language of saintly hearts to God from generation to generation. Thus, in our daily confession, having sought for pardoning mercy and restoring grace, we pray that "we may hereafter lead a godly, righteous, and sober life." Thus, after the sublimest adoration in the Te Deum, we humbly say, "Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin." Thus we are taught that "baptism represents unto us our profession,

which is to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto Him ; that as He died and rose again for us, so should we who are baptized die from sin and rise again unto righteousness, continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living." Thus in our Communion Service we remind ourselves of His unutterable love, "who did humble Himself even to the death upon the cross for us miserable sinners, that He might make us the children of God and exalt us to everlasting life ;" and we pray Him "to forgive us all that is past, and to grant that we may ever hereafter serve and please Him in newness of life." In two words, repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ[t] interpenetrate all the services of our Prayer-book ; and hence, though they often rise to the loftiest adoration, which Scripture reveals as our privilege in the covenant of the Gospel, there is never wanting that deep under-tone of sinful man's true position before the infinite holiness of his God. This is the secret of their reality, sobriety, and breadth. The most experienced saints have found in them the easiest utterance for their

[t] Acts. xx. 21.

holiest desires, and the broken-hearted sinner has breathed in them his first cries for mercy.

So is it with this Collect. It may well be the language of the returning prodigal. What prayer could better befit his lips than this: I meekly beseech Thee, O Father, to raise me from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness? And not seldom has the death of a beloved friend been God's arrow of conviction in the anguished heart. All other means have failed; but this avails, of which I venture to record the following true and touching instance. It was told me twenty-five years ago, by a pastor who knew the circumstances well. There was a widowed mother, with an only child, whom she loved with all a woman's and a widow's fondness; but, while the child was in health, no persuasions could induce the mother to attend to the concerns of her soul. Her life was wholly wrapt up in the mortal life of her little one; but God smote the child—it became very ill—it died. Her clergyman went to her, hoping gently to probe and then bind up the wound; but he had not long entered her cottage ere she looked up to him and said, "Ah, sir, I will tell you how it was. There was a Shepherd, sir, and the Shepherd had a sheep, and the

sheep had a lamb. The Shepherd tried every way to draw them into His fold ; but nothing would induce the sheep to enter it, while the little lamb was sporting by her side. The Shepherd was almost in despair ; but He thought, I have one way left. So He took the little lamb in His arms, and placed it gently over the fence into the fold ; and then sure enough the sheep went in, that she might go and be where her little lamb was. And so, sir," said that poor widowed childless mother, "it shall be with me." And so in truth it was : from that time forth she gave herself to God, and lived the new life of faith.

O, how many a spiritual birthday has dated from an opened grave ! Pride is broken down. The heart is bleeding at every pore. All the world has to offer cannot soothe the agony, or fill the aching void. But Jesus draws near, the Man of Sorrows, the Brother born for adversity. He knows the wound that bleeds inwardly. He beckons the wanderer to his feet, the mourner to his bosom. He elicits all the heart's confidence. He whispers, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee. He pours the oil of His Spirit and the wine of His love into the deep, deep wound. He heals the broken in heart. He tenders His match-

less sympathy. He points to the better home, where all His children shall be reunited for ever in His presence, a home which death cannot shadow and sorrow cannot touch. What is this? it is nothing less than the spirit's resurrection from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness.

But though this petition well befits the repenting sinner, its chief intent is for the contrite children of God. They are called day by day to walk in newness of life, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, and to reckon themselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.[u] Their privilege is, being now made free from sin and become the servants to God, to have their fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life.[v] Being married to Another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, they are commanded to bring forth fruit unto God.[w] They mind the things of the Spirit, and through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body.[x] The warfare is long, the conflict sharp, for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, so that too often they do not

[u] Rom. vi. 4—11.
[v] Rom. vi. 22.
[w] Rom. vii. 4.
[x] Rom. viii. 5—13.

the things they would ;[y] but notwithstanding their many failures, the language of the Apostle must be theirs, I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me ; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.[z] Thus they daily die unto sin, and live the resurrection life of righteousness.

But never are we more conscious of the vanity of things seen and temporal, and of the priceless value of things unseen and eternal, than beside the open grave. Our brother sleeps in Jesus. What avails him all the world calls good and great, save only as he has faithfully traded with the talents entrusted to him by that Master before whom he now stands ? He has gone to his rest and his reward ; and for ourselves, as we look down for the last time upon the coffin that encloses his mortal tabernacle, the words of Jesus, his Lord and ours, seem invested with new power and glory : If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me ; for whosoever will save his life shall lose

[y] Gal. v. 17.

[z] Gal. ii. 20.

it, but whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it.[a]

What an era in the biography of saints has often been the death of one they love! It seems as if the golden gates, through which their beloved had passed into the Paradise of God, had been left open for a little while, and that some of heaven's glory had shone down through the mists into this valley of tears. They upon whom that radiance has fallen have a possession for all after life, of which nothing can deprive them. Abraham had long lived the pilgrim's life, and sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country; but it was not till the death of his beloved Sarah that his confession is recorded, I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.[b] Isaac had been from his birth the son of laughter and delight; but when his father died, we read, It came to pass after the death of Abraham that God blessed his son Isaac.[c] Joseph feared God from his youth, but when Jacob yielded up the ghost and was gathered to his people, by his petition to Pharaoh that he might bury his

[a] Luke ix. 23—24. [b] Gen. xxiii. 4. [c] Gen. xxv. 11.

father in the land of Canaan he confessed that Egypt was not their home.[d] Joshua was a faithful minister during the lifetime of Moses; but when his great predecessor died on Pisgah, we read, Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands upon him.[e] David died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour; and then Solomon was strengthened in his kingdom, and the Lord his God was with him.[f] It was not till the Lord took away Elijah by a whirlwind into heaven that a double portion of His Spirit rested on Elisha.[g] The Church owes Paul to the dying Stephen's prayer.[h] Timothy's evangelistic zeal was kindled anew by Paul's martyrdom.[i] The holy remembrance of those to whom Peter wrote was quickened and sustained by the words of the Apostle after he had put off his tabernacle.[j] And the last legacy of John in Patmos has been the richest heirloom of the students of the oracles of God.

"Excelsior" must ever be the device upon the banner

[d] Gen. l. 5. [e] Deut. xxxiv. 9.
[f] 1 Chron. xxix. 28; 2 Chron. i. 1. [g] 2 Kings ii. 9, 10.
[h] "*Si Stephanus non orasset, ecclesia Paulum non haberet.*"—Augustin.
[i] 2 Tim. iv. 5—8. [j] 2 Pet. i. 13—15.

of the soldiers of the cross. And never does the clarion-call to press toward the mark for the prize of our high calling vibrate more distinctly on the ear of faith, than when the myriad sounds of earth are hushed amid the silences of the days of bereavement. Who feels not that there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed? Who longs not for a deeper knowledge of the whole counsel of God, for a purer delight in the heavenly duties of prayer and praise, for a calmer assurance of faith and hope, for a more entire submission of his will to the will of his Father in heaven, for a more resolute crucifying of the flesh and a more earnest cultivation of the fruits of the Spirit, for a readier willingness to serve and suffer with our Master here, and for a brighter and clearer insight into the joy of resting and reigning with Him for ever? Those, whose walk with God has been most close, will plead most earnestly the prayer that they may be daily raised more and more from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness, and may thus day by day be made more and more capable of the fruition of the glorious Godhead of their Lord, and more and more meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

But haply amid that group of mourners there are

other deeply wounded hearts. It is not with them as once it was. They have left their first love.[k] They have often refused the proffered communion of the Saviour, and He has withdrawn Himself.[l] They have grieved the Holy Spirit of God, whereby they are sealed unto the day of redemption.[m] They have suffered the world to resume much of its power over them. Perhaps they have pursued all their abundant labours, but they have seen very little of the Master. And it may be that, under a dull craving sense of His absence, they have sung with others, scarcely realizing what the words meant,—

Nearer my God to Thee,
Nearer to Thee;
Even though it be a cross
That raiseth me;
Still all my song shall be,
Nearer my God to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.

And now the cross has been laid upon them, rougher, sharper, heavier than they ever deemed it possible to bear. God has taken from them the desire of their eyes at a stroke, and their heart within them is deso-

[k] Rev. ii. 4. [l] Song v. 1—6. [m] Eph. iv. 30.

late. But though His hand presseth them sore, He Himself is very nigh unto them. And the accents of His voice fall more clearly than they have fallen for a weary time on their awaking and anxious ear, Oh, Israel, return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen. They answer with the deep response of a troubled spirit, Yea, Lord, cost what it will, take away all iniquity and receive us graciously. And once more He replies, I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him and observed him: I am like a green fir-tree. From me is thy fruit found.[n]

THE WILDERNESS GARDEN.

Let my Beloved come into His garden.—SONG iv. 16.

"A rude unthankful plot, that ill repays
My labour—rich in promise, scant in yield;—

[n] Hos. xiv. 1—8.

Its myrtles choked with wild convolvulus ;
Its vines tangled with briars, its choice trees
Hoary with lichen, and its flowering beds
With mosses overgrown, and waving ferns :
And, where the fruit should mellow on the wall,
The ivy hugs the stones. And yet the sun
Shines on this hollow all the summer day,
And here the night clouds shed their kindliest dews.
Weeds ripen, but the fruits and flowers, alas !
Are few and far, and matted with thick leaves.
It hath been so for years. Must it be so
For ever : life's for ever ? I have wept
Warm showers of tears upon its idle soil,
And labour'd early, and late taken rest ;
It boots not. I can do no more : it needs
A stronger arm, a deeper skill than mine.
O Thou, the only Husbandman of hearts,
Stand, Lord, no longer at the wicket. See,
I draw the bar, I throw the latch-gate wide :
Come, Lord, with all Thy tenderness and power,
And dress and keep my garden for Thine own."

"But if I enter at thy cry, My child,
I must pluck up full many a pleasant weed,
And prune away full many a wayward branch,
And disentwine full many a tendril's clasp,
And tear the ivy from its nest, and train
The bleeding fruit-bough to the ripening South,
And haply must transplant some drooping flowers,
Some of thy choicest treasures, from this soil
To My own mansion. I must come as Lord
And Master of thy Eden, if I come.

My pruning-knife is keen, My hand is firm.
Say, shall I linger at the wicket-gate,
Or enter at thy prayer?"

"Come in, Lord, come:
Thy pruning-knife is keen, Thy hand is firm,
But, Lord, Thy heart is tremulous with love;
And Thou hast known the bitterness of tears.
Thou wilt not break the bruised reed for nought,
Thou wilt not wound the shrinking plant in vain.
Ask what Thou wilt, I would not say Thee nay:
Do only as Thou wilt with me and mine.
Thy will is only to make earth as heaven;
And if Thou deignest here to fix Thy home,
And shed Thy benison upon the flowers
Thyself art planting, watching, watering,
Or even after lapse of many days
To pluck some fruitage from Thy husbandry,
Surely my ruin'd Eden would be yet
Part of God's Paradise. Come in, Lord! come
To-day, Lord, not to-morrow. Oh, come now!"

"I am within thy garden; let Me work."

THE TRIUNE BENEDICTION.

THE grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. Amen.

HOW often these words pass too thoughtlessly over our lips or fall too lightly on our ears! The great act of worship has been offered; the service is almost ended, and the benediction too frequently even to the devout suppliant is nothing but a musical cadence, which gratifies the ear but does not penetrate the heart. And yet in truth this is the coronal of prayers; the best wine is kept to the last; all the fragrance of the Gospel is here condensed in the sweetest ointment of spikenard.

When first we attempt to bend our thoughts upon God, the only God,

Perfect in power and love and purity,

we are dazzled and abashed (as the eye is dazzled by

gazing on the pure white light) in the presence of His cloudless, shadowless, filmless goodness. Do we venture into the open? Ah, how soon our eyes fail with looking upward! For we are sinners, and God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. We are distraught. If we see Him not, we die; for in the light of the King's countenance is life, and it is scarcely to be called life for a child never to see or hold converse with its father. And yet, if we see Him, we die; for is it not written, Thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see Me and live?

But although no mortal eye can long endure the unmitigated blaze of the noonday sun, even the youngest child drinks in the softened beauty of the rainbow arch. And in this benediction of the Gospel there is a rainbow round about the Eternal Throne in sight like unto an emerald. Here we are invited to draw nigh and gaze and live. The name of God must indeed ever be the mystery of mysteries. Nor would we have it otherwise. Our own complex being, body, soul, and spirit, is so fearfully and wonderfully compact together that we often pause baffled and bewildered as we strive to read and understand ourselves. And could we find rest in our God, if His Essence were

transparent to our inspection? I trow not. The mystery of humanity demands an infinite mystery in Deity. But in this benediction the name of God does not appal, nay, it attracts us. It is our life. We have not solved the mystery; but we hide in it and are at peace.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ first meets us, for He is the Way, and no one cometh unto the Father but by Him.[o] It is a boundless unfathomable grace to us-ward. Whether you regard His grace, when from everlasting in the counsels of redemption His delights were with the sons of men,[p] or whether you gaze adoringly on the humiliation of His grace, when He who was rich for our sakes became poor[q] (how poor, let Bethlehem and Nazareth testify); or whether you behold the glory of His Ministry, when, full of grace and truth, He spake as never man spake, and wrought deeds of love surpassing human thought; or whether you contemplate His supremest act of grace, when Incarnate Love gave Himself for man upon the cross; or whether you track His course from the open sepulchre and the crest of Olivet to His throne at the right hand of the Father, where He ever lives to make

[o] John xiv. 6. [p] Prov. viii. 31. [q] 2 Cor. viii. 9.

intercession for us; or whether you ponder His words of promise, If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also,[r] you must admit that never grace was like His. Its majesty and tenderness are alike unapproachable. And this introduces us to

The love of God. God is love. As to His nature, God is spirit; as to His purity, God is light; but as to His essence, God is love. Power belongeth unto God; wisdom and might are His; but love is His very being. And they who trust in Jesus have the assurance from His own lips, The Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from God.[s] The child of light basks in the light. The child of love dwells in love. Yea, our love is the repercussion of the beams of His love. We love Him because He loved us first; and this not of ourselves, but by

The fellowship of the Holy Ghost. Without the indwelling of the Blessed Spirit in our hearts even the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God would be of no avail to us in our utter prostration and helplessness. It would be the famished

[r] John xiv. 3. [s] John xvi. 27.

gazing on a feast which they could not rise to taste. But through Jesus we have access by One Spirit unto the Father.[t] God sends forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.[u] O miracle of condescending love! That same Eternal Spirit who searches even the very depths of God, that same Spirit who is poured out without measure upon the Incarnate Son, that same Spirit who prompts the songs of the cherubim and seraphim before the throne, He dwells in the humble and contrite heart, He sprinkles the conscience with the atoning blood of Jesus, He whispers peace, He teaches us to pray, He sheds abroad the love of God in our breast, He traces the Saviour's image in our spirit, He awakens a longing for glory, so that there is a vital union between the soul and God. We dwell in God—a temple of unutterable delight; and God dwells in us —a lowly abode, which infinite Love alone makes worthy of itself.

Such is the barest outline of the meaning of this Triune benediction. It is indeed sweet to him who suffers its heavenly dew to distil upon his heart from the hour he first learned to lisp it at his mother's

[t] Eph. ii. 18. [u] Gal. iv. 6.

knee to the latest stage of his journey home. It is sweet when we breathe it in solitary prayer at the throne of grace; it is sweet as we kneel around the family altar (who remembers not the solemn accents of a parent's voice repeating these words of blessing?); it is sweet as it speaks peace to us and our brethren in the courts of our One Father's house. But never does it shed sweeter balm upon the soul, than when we are about to leave the sacred remains of our beloved in the holy keeping of our God. We must shortly go forth from the calm seclusion of our sorrow to the duties and endurances of life. The friend we mourn will be no longer by our side. But this blessing will be among us and remain with us always. The grace of Jesus, the Man of Sorrows, the Brother born for adversity, whose is the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season to him that is weary, will be sufficient, for His strength is made perfect in weakness. The love of God, who pities us as a father pities his children, and who says to the orphan, As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you;[v] and to the widow, Thy Maker is thy husband: the Lord of Hosts is His name,[w] will

[v] Isa. lxvi. 13. [w] Isa. liv. 5.

wrap us round on every side. And the communion of the Holy Ghost, our promised Guide and Teacher and Comforter, will abide with us for ever. The time is short; the advent is near; the re-union is eternal.

As the peace of this benediction steals into our hearts, we are conscious that the prayer, which we have so often pleaded with those who have gone a little while before us, is already receiving its accomplishment, O God, the King of Glory, who hast exalted Thine only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph unto Thy kingdom in heaven, we beseech Thee leave us not comfortless, but send Thy Holy Ghost to comfort us, and exalt us unto the same place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, world without end. Amen.

The Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.—MATT. xxviii. 19.

Father of heaven above,
Dwelling in light and love,
Ancient of days,
Light unapproachable,
Love inexpressible,
Thee, the Invisible,
Laud we and praise.

Christ the eternal Word,
Christ the incarnate Lord,
Saviour of all,
High throned above all height,
God of God, Light of Light,
Increate, infinite,
On thee we call.

O God, the Holy Ghost,
Whose fires of Pentecost
Burn evermore,
In this far wilderness
Leave us not comfortless :
Thee we love, Thee we bless,
Thee we adore.

Strike your harps, heavenly powers ;
With your glad chants shall ours
Trembling ascend :
All praise, O God, to Thee,
Three in One, One in Three,
Praise everlastingly,
World without end. Amen.

THE END.

GILBERT AND RIVINGTON, PRINTERS, ST. JOHN'S SQUARE, LONDON.

DATE DUE

SEP 4 '78

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PRINTED IN U.S.A.

242.4
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Bickersteth, Edward Henry

AUTHOR

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